



Asylum for Mankind: America, 1607-1800

Marilyn C. Baseler

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Ever since the Age of Discovery, Europeans have viewed the New World as a haven for the victims of religious persecution and a dumping ground for social liabilities. Marilyn C. Baseler shows how the New World's role as a refuge for the victims of political, as well as religious and economic, oppression gradually devolved on the thirteen colonies that became the United States.

She traces immigration patterns and policies to show how the new American Republic became an "asylum for mankind." Baseler explains how British and colonial officials and landowners lured settlers from rival nations with promises of religious toleration, economic opportunity, and the "rights of Englishmen," and identifies the liberties, disabilities, and benefits experienced by different immigrant groups. She also explains how the exploitation of slaves, who immigrated from Africa in chains, subsidized the living standards of Europeans who came by choice.

American revolutionaries enthusiastically assumed the responsibility for serving as an asylum for the victims of political oppression, according to Baseler, but soon saw the need for a probationary period before granting citizenship to immigrants unexperienced in exercising and safeguarding republican liberty. Revolutionary Americans also tried to discourage the immigration of those who might jeopardize the nation's republican future. Her work defines the historical context for current attempts by municipal, state, and federal governments to abridge the rights of aliens.

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