

The New England Colonies

In the 1600s and the 1700s, English settlers founded 13 colonies on the eastern coast of what is now the United States. The colonies in the north were called New England. In 1630, the Puritans, a religious group that left England so they could practice their religion in their own way, established Massachusetts Bay. Connecticut was founded by people who believed that the Massachusetts government had become too powerful and that they needed a more representative government. Roger Williams founded Rhode Island because he believed that the Puritan church was too powerful and that the business of church and government should be kept separate. In Rhode Island, a religiously tolerant colony, believers of different faiths were allowed to practice their religion.

Located along the Atlantic coast, the winters were cold and growing season was short in New England. The soil was not fertile. Some settlers practiced subsistence farming. Also, some settlers made their livings by fishing, whaling and shipbuilding. Communities were close knit and church centered. The meetinghouse was the center of town and it had two purposes: 1) church- Puritans worshiped there on Sundays and 2) used for town meetings – people could vote on the needs of the village.



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The Middle Colonies

By 1700, England had four colonies in the region directly south of New England. These Middle Colonies included New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware. However the colony was originally called New Netherlands when it was owned by the Dutch. To encourage settlers to come to New Netherlands, the Dutch started the patroon system. Under the patroon system, a few rich families own large pieces of land and had others work on it. The patroons ruled the lives of the settlers on their land. They decided how much land each family would get as well as how much rent they paid. In addition, they held their own courts and gave out punishments for any crime committed on their land. As a result of the harsh rule of the patroons, the population of New Netherlands remained small. The Dutch West India Company ran the colony. The last governor of New Netherlands was Peter Stuyvesant. Stuyvesant was not well-liked. He made law breakers pay heavy fines and sometimes had them whipped as punishment. In addition, he drove the colony into debt by carrying on many costly wars with the local Native Americans. England didn't like the fact that the Dutch colony was in between the New England and Southern Colonies. Therefore, the English wanted control of this colony because they were afraid that the Dutch might interfere with their trade or try and seize their colonies. When the English arrived with warships, Stuyvesant was forced to surrender the colony because he lacked weapons and the colonists refused to support him.

William Penn, a Quaker, founded the religiously tolerant colony of Pennsylvania. Quakers believed that all people were equal in God's eyes and that Native Americans should be treated fairly. The middle colonies focused on religious freedom and a more representative government.

Farmers were able to grow cash crops on the fertile soil in the Middle Colonies. In addition, this region had short winters and summers were warmer with long growing seasons. They exported so much grain that the Middle Colonies were known as the Breadbasket Colonies. The Middle Colonies' economy also included small manufacturing and the raising of livestock. As the colonies grew, more settlers traveled west of the Appalachian Mountains, which was the western part of Maryland and Virginia called the backcountry. The route to the backcountry was known as the Great Wagon Road. Settlers built large wagons, called Conestoga Wagons, to carry goods along the way.

To start farms, settlers had to clear thick forests. Settlers made wooden dishes from logs, gathered honey and hunted animals. Settlers learned Indian ways but also moved onto Indian lands often causing conflict with Native Americans. Many different groups of people settled in the Middle Colonies. Among them were English, Dutch, Swedes, Germans and Africans. Religious freedom attracted many groups including Protestants, Catholics, Quakers, and Jews.



The Southern Colonies

To the South of the Middle Colonies, the English founded the Southern Colonies. Maryland was founded as a place where Roman Catholics could worship freely. Georgia was founded as a place where people who owed money in England could start a new life. In addition, the English wanted to use this colony as a military outpost against Spanish Florida. Virginia, North and South Carolina were founded mainly for farming and trade. Many of the English colonists who came to Virginia during the 1600s fought with Native Americans for land. In 1676, Nathaniel Bacon, a planter, organized men and women on their frontier. They wanted the governor to do more to protect them from the Native Americans. Bacon wanted to seize more of their land for tobacco farming. When the governor refused, Bacon and his followers raided the Indian villages and burnt buildings in Jamestown. Bacon's rebellion showed that the frontier settlers were determined to stay and push even deeper into Indian lands.

Two ways of life developed in the Southern Colonies. On the Tidewater, near the coast, large farms called plantations developed. Soon, the owners of the plantations became rich and powerful. Backcountry life was simpler. Settlers had smaller farms in this area of hills and thick forests. The South's warm climate and fertile land and year-round growing season were ideal for plantation crops like rice, tobacco and indigo.

By 1700, slavery had become increasingly important part of plantation life. Planters preferred slaves to indentured servants because buying a slave was a one-time expense. As the plantation economy continued to grow, planters began to have difficulty finding laborers to work the plantations. Therefore, the planters turned to enslaved Africans in America. Enslaved Africans cleared land, raised crops, and tended livestock.

They used farming skills they brought from West Africa. As the importance of slavery increased, planters passed laws that put greater limits on the rights of slaves called slave codes. These laws treated Africans not as human beings, but as property.



| Colonial Regions | <i>Reasons for settlement</i> | <i>Climate & Geography</i> | <i>Economy (occupations/jobs)</i> | <i>Way of Life</i> |
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| List the New England Colonies: Color them on your map (blue) | | | | |
| List the Middle Colonies: Color them on your map (red) | | | | |
| List the Southern Colonies: Color them on your map | | | | |