

Topic 2.3

The Regions of British Colonies

Liberty of conscience . . . we ask as our undoubted right by the law of God, of nature, and of our own country.

William Penn, "The Great Case of Liberty of Conscience," 1670

Learning Objective: Explain how and why environmental and other factors shaped the development and expansion of various British colonies that developed and expanded from 1607 to 1754.

The English colonies developed regional or sectional differences based on many influences including topography, natural resources, climate, and the background of their settlers. Starting with Jamestown (Virginia) in 1607 and ending in 1733 in Georgia, 13 distinct colonies developed along the Atlantic coast of North America. Every colony received its authority to operate by a charter granting special privileges from the monarch. Each charter described the relationship between the colony and the crown. Over time, three types of charters—and three types of colonies—developed:

- **Corporate colonies**, such as Jamestown, were operated by joint-stock companies, at least during these colonies' early years.
- **Royal colonies**, such as Virginia after 1624, were to be under the direct authority and rule of the king's government.
- **Proprietary colonies**, such as Maryland and Pennsylvania, were under the authority of individuals granted charters of ownership by the king.

The British took pride in free farmers working the land. Unlike the French and Spanish colonists, the English had a tradition of representative government. They were accustomed to elections for representatives speaking for property owners and deciding important measures, such as taxes, proposed by the king's government. While political and religious conflicts dominated England, feelings for independence grew in the colonies. Eventually, tensions emerged between the king and his colonial subjects.

Early English Settlements

The earliest English colonies were founded for very different reasons and hundreds of miles apart in Virginia and Massachusetts.

Jamestown

England's King James I chartered the **Virginia Company**, a **joint-stock company** that founded the first permanent English colony in America at **Jamestown** in 1607.

Early Problems The first settlers of Jamestown suffered greatly, mostly from their own mistakes. The settlement's location in a swampy area along the James River resulted in fatal outbreaks of dysentery and malaria. Many of the settlers were gentlemen unaccustomed to physical work or gold hunters who refused to hunt or farm. A source of goods came from trade with American Indians, but conflicts between settlers and the natives stopped trade and settlers starved.

Through the leadership of **Captain John Smith**, Jamestown survived its first five years. Through the efforts of **John Rolfe** and his Indian wife, **Pocahontas**, the colony developed a variety of tobacco that became popular in Europe and a profitable crop. To recruit White settlers, Virginia provided 50 acres of land, called a *headright*, to any settler or to anyone who paid for passage for a settler to the colony. While the headright system helped many Europeans move to Virginia, it mostly aided landowners who added to their holdings by sponsoring indentured servants. During the first several decades of colonization, planters mostly used White laborers. However, by the end of the 17th century, landowners relied more on enslaved Africans.

Transition to a Royal Colony Despite tobacco, by 1624 the Virginia colony remained near collapse. More than 5,000 people had settled in it, but death from disease and conflicts with Indians was so high that the population was only 1,300. Further, the Virginia Company was nearly bankrupt. King James I finally revoked the company charter and took direct control. Now known as **Virginia**, the colony became England's first royal colony.

Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay

About 500 miles to the north of Jamestown, English settlers founded two other colonies, Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, in the region that became known as New England. While many of the settlers in these colonies came as indentured servants in search of economic opportunity, the distinctive force that set the tone for these colonies was religious motivation, the search for wealth. Both were settled by English Protestants who dissented from the government-supported Church of England, known as the Anglican Church. The Church of England, lead by the English king, had broken away from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534. However, it had kept most of the Catholic rituals and governing structure. The dissenters, influenced by the teachings of Swiss theologian John Calvin, charged that the Church of England should break completely with Rome. England's King James I, who reigned from 1603 to 1625, viewed the religious dissenters as a threat to his religious and political authority and ordered them arrested and jailed.

The Plymouth Colony The radical dissenters, the **Separatists**, wanted to organize a completely separate church that was independent of royal control. Several hundred Separatists left England for Holland in search of religious freedom. Because of their travels, they became known as **Pilgrims**. Economic hardship and cultural differences with the Dutch led many of the Pilgrims to seek another haven for their religion. They chose the new colony in America, then operated by the Virginia Company of London. In 1620, a small group of Pilgrims set sail for Virginia aboard the *Mayflower*. Fewer than half of the 100 passengers on this ship were Separatists; the rest were people who had economic motives for making the voyage.

After a hard voyage that lasted 65 days, the *Mayflower* dropped anchor off the Massachusetts coast, 600 miles north of Virginia. Rather than sail to Jamestown as planned, the Pilgrims established a new colony at Plymouth.

After a first winter that saw half the settlers perish, the survivors were helped by local American Indians to adapt to the land. They celebrated a good harvest at a thanksgiving feast (the first Thanksgiving) in 1621. Strong leaders, including Captain Miles Standish and Governor William Bradford, grew Plymouth slowly. Fish, furs, and lumber became the mainstays of the economy.

Massachusetts Bay Colony A group of more moderate dissenters, called **Puritans**, believed that the Church of England could be reformed, or purified. The persecution of Puritans increased when a new king, Charles I, took the throne in 1625. Seeking religious freedom, a group of Puritans gained a royal charter for the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629).

In 1630, a thousand Puritans led by **John Winthrop** sailed for Massachusetts and founded Boston. Religious and political conflict in England in the 1630s drove some 15,000 settlers to the Massachusetts Bay Colony—a movement known as the **Great Migration** (The same term is used for the movement of African Americans from southern to northern states in the 20th century.)

Puritans from Massachusetts Bay founded several settlements in New England. In contrast to the plantations in Virginia, these New England settlements were mixtures of small towns and family farms that relied on a blend of commerce and agriculture.

Religious Issues in Maryland

In 1632, King Charles I split off part of Virginia to create a new colony, Maryland. He granted control of it to George Calvert (Lord Baltimore), a Catholic noble, for his service to the king. Maryland was the first proprietary colony. The king expected proprietors to carry out his wishes faithfully, thus giving him control.

The first Lord Baltimore died and Maryland passed to his son, **Cecil Calvert**—the second Lord Baltimore. The son set about implementing his father's plan in 1634 to provide a haven for his fellow Catholics, who faced persecution from Protestants in Britain.

Act of Toleration To avoid persecution in England, several wealthy Catholics emigrated to Maryland and established plantations. However, they

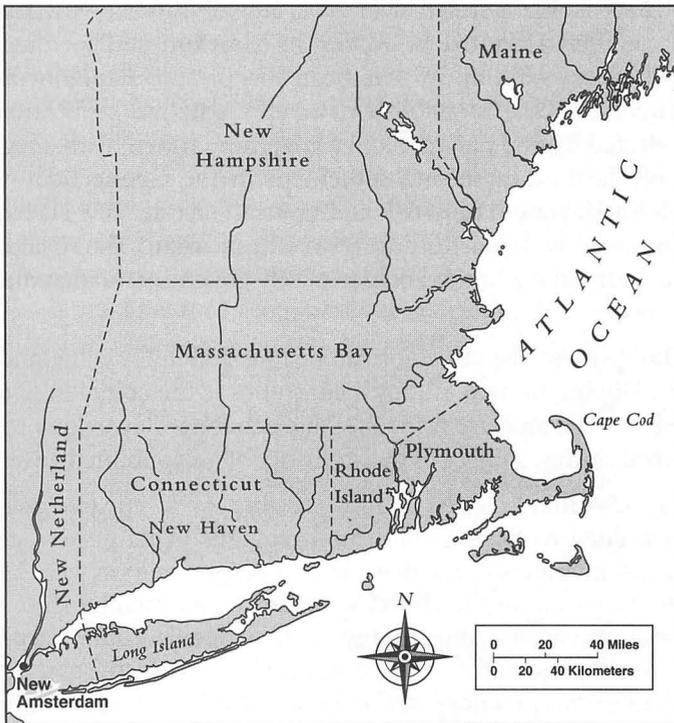
were quickly outnumbered by Protestant farmers who held a majority in Maryland's assembly. In 1649, Calvert persuaded the assembly to adopt the **Act of Toleration**, the first colonial statute granting religious freedom to all Christians. However, the statute also called for the death of anyone who denied the divinity of Jesus.

Protestant Revolt In the late 1600s, Protestants angered by a Catholic proprietor ignited a civil war. The Protestants triumphed, and they repealed the Act of Toleration. Catholics lost the right to vote in elections for the assembly. In the 18th century, Maryland's economy and society was like that of Virginia, except that Maryland tolerated more diversity among Protestant sects.

Development of New England

Strong religious convictions sustained settlers in their struggle to establish the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies. However, Puritan leaders showed intolerance of anyone who questioned their religious teachings, often banishing dissidents from the Bay colony. These dissidents formed settlements that became Rhode Island and Connecticut.

NEW ENGLAND AND ATLANTIC COLONIES
1600s



Rhode Island One well-respected Puritan minister who moved from England to Boston was **Roger Williams**, who arrived in 1631. He believed that the individual's conscience was beyond the control of any civil or church authority. His teachings placed him in conflict with other Puritan leaders, who ordered his banishment. Leaving Boston, Williams fled southward to Narragansett Bay, where he and a few followers founded the community of **Providence** in 1636, and Williams started one of the first Baptist churches in America. The government allowed Catholics, Quakers, and Jews to worship freely. Further, the new colony was unique in that it recognized the rights of American Indians and paid them for the use of their land.

Another dissident who questioned the doctrines of the Puritan authorities was **Anne Hutchinson**. She believed in *antinomianism*—the idea that since individuals receive salvation through their faith alone, they were not required to follow traditional moral laws. Banished from the Bay colony, Hutchinson and her followers founded Portsmouth in 1638. A few years later, Hutchinson migrated to Long Island and was killed in an American Indian uprising.

In 1644, Roger Williams was granted a charter from the Parliament that joined Providence and Portsmouth into a single colony, **Rhode Island**. Because this colony tolerated diverse beliefs, it served as a refuge for many.

Connecticut To the west of Rhode Island, the Connecticut River Valley attracted others who were unhappy with the Massachusetts authorities. The Reverend **Thomas Hooker** led a large group of Boston Puritans into the valley and founded Hartford in 1636. The Hartford settlers then drew up the first written constitution in American history, the *Fundamental Orders of Connecticut* (1639). It established a representative government with a legislature elected by popular vote and a governor chosen by that legislature.

South of Hartford, a second settlement in the Connecticut Valley was started by **John Davenport** in 1637 and given the name New Haven. In 1665, New Haven joined with Hartford to form **Connecticut**. The royal charter for Connecticut granted it a limited degree of self-government, including election of the governor.

New Hampshire The last colony to be founded in New England was **New Hampshire**. Hoping to increase royal control over the colonies, King Charles II separated New Hampshire from the Massachusetts Bay colony in 1679 and made it a royal colony, subject to the authority of an appointed governor.

Halfway Covenant To be a full member of a Puritan congregation, individuals needed to have a confirmed religious experience, a conversion. However, fewer members of the new native-born generation were having such experiences. To maintain the church's influence and membership, a *halfway covenant* was offered by some clergy so that people could become partial members even if they had not felt a conversion. Nevertheless, as the years passed, strict Puritan practices weakened in most New England communities in order to maintain church membership.

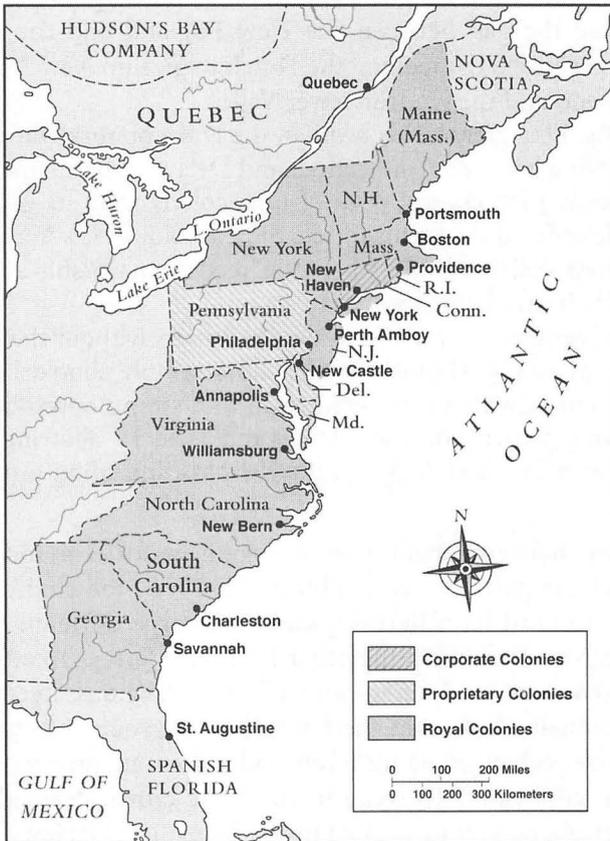
Restoration Colonies

New American colonies were founded in the late 17th century during a period known as the Restoration. The name refers to the restoration of the monarchy under King Charles II in 1660 following a brief period of republican rule under a Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell.

The Carolinas

As a reward for helping him gain the throne, Charles II granted a huge tract of land between Virginia and Spanish Florida to eight nobles. In 1663, these nobles became the lord proprietors of the Carolinas. In 1729, two royal colonies, South Carolina and North Carolina, were formed from the original grant.

THE THIRTEEN ENGLISH COLONIES
AROUND 1750



South Carolina In 1670, a few colonists from England and some planters from the island of Barbados founded Charleston, named for their king, Charles II. Initially, the southern economy was based on trading furs and providing food for the West Indies. By the middle of the 18th century, South Carolina's large **rice-growing plantations**, worked by enslaved Africans, resembled the economy and culture of the West Indies.

North Carolina Unlike South Carolina, the region that became North Carolina had few good harbors and poor transportation. As a result, it developed few large plantations and little reliance on slavery. It attracted farmers from Virginia and New England who established small, self-sufficient **tobacco farms**. Some made use of indentured servants and enslaved Africans. North Carolina in the 18th century earned a reputation for democratic views and autonomy from British control.

The Middle Colonies

The four colonies between New England and Virginia—**New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware**—are often called the Middle Colonies. They had fertile land that attracted a relatively diverse group of European immigrants, good harbors where cities developed, and tolerant attitudes toward religion.

New York Charles II wished to consolidate holdings along the Atlantic coast and close the gap between the New England and the **Chesapeake colonies**. This required compelling the Dutch to give up New Amsterdam on Manhattan Island and the Hudson River Valley.

In 1664, the king granted his brother, the Duke of York (the future James II), the lands lying between Connecticut and Delaware Bay. James dispatched a force that easily took control of the Dutch colony from its governor, Peter Stuyvesant. He ordered his agents to rename the colony New York, but to treat the Dutch settlers well by allowing them the freedom to worship as they pleased and to speak their own language.

James also ordered new taxes, duties, and rents without the consent of a representative assembly. He insisted that no assembly should be allowed in his colony. Taxation without representation met strong opposition from the English-speaking settlers. In 1683, James did yield by allowing New York's governor to grant broad civil and political rights, including a representative assembly.

New Jersey Believing that the territory of New York was too large, James split it in 1664. He gave the section located between the Hudson River and Delaware Bay to Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. In 1674, one received West New Jersey and the other East New Jersey. To attract settlers, both made generous land offers and allowed religious freedom and an assembly. Eventually, they sold their interests to groups of Quakers. Land titles in the Jerseys changed hands often, and inaccurate property lines added to the general confusion. To settle matters, the crown decided in 1702 to combine the two Jerseys into a single royal colony: New Jersey.

Pennsylvania, “The Holy Experiment” To the west of New Jersey lay a broad expanse of forested land that the royal family gave to a military and political leader, William Penn, in payment for a debt. The land became known as Penn's woods, or Pennsylvania.

When Penn died, he left the land to his son, also named **William Penn**. The son had joined a group of Christians who called themselves the Religious Society of Friends. Commonly known as **Quakers**, they were considered radical by most people in Britain and the colonies. They believed that religious authority was found within each person and not in the Bible nor in any outside source. This led them to support equality among all men and women and to reject violence and resist military service. Because their beliefs challenged authority, the Quakers of England were persecuted and jailed for their beliefs.

Penn hoped his colony would provide a religious refuge for Quakers and other persecuted people as well as generate income and profits for himself. He put his Quaker beliefs to the test by enacting liberal ideas in government. He provided a **Frame of Government** (1682–1683), which guaranteed a representative assembly elected by landowners, and a written constitution, the **Charter of Liberties (1701)**, which guaranteed freedom of worship for all and unrestricted immigration. Unlike other colonial proprietors, who governed from England, Penn crossed the ocean to supervise the founding of Philadelphia on the Delaware River. He brought a plan for a grid pattern of streets, which was later imitated by other cities. He also attempted to treat the American Indians fairly and to not cheat them when purchasing their land.

To attract settlers, Penn hired agents and published notices throughout Europe promising political and religious freedom and generous land terms. Penn's lands along the Delaware River had previously been settled by several thousand Dutch and Swedish colonists, who eased the arrival of the newcomers.

Delaware In 1702, Penn granted the lower three counties of Pennsylvania their own assembly. In effect, Delaware became a separate colony, even though its governor was the same as Pennsylvania's until the American Revolution.

Georgia, The Last Mainland Colony

In 1732, **Georgia**, the thirteenth and final British colony between Canada and the Caribbean, was chartered. It was the only colony to receive direct financial support from the government. The British had two reasons to start a new southern colony:

- They wanted to create a defensive buffer to protect South Carolina plantations from the Spanish Florida.
- They wanted a place to send the thousands of people in England imprisoned for debt. Sending debtors to a colony would both relieve the overcrowded jails and provide a chance for people to start life over.

Given a royal charter for a proprietary colony, a group of philanthropists led by **James Oglethorpe** founded Savannah in 1733. Oglethorpe, the colony's first governor, put into effect a plan for making the colony thrive. There were strict regulations, including bans on drinking rum and slavery. Nevertheless, partly because of the constant threat of Spanish attack, the colony did not prosper.

By 1752, Oglethorpe's group gave up. Georgia was taken over by the British government and became a royal colony. Restrictions on rum and slavery were dropped. The colony grew slowly, adopting the plantation system of South Carolina. In 1776, Georgia was the smallest of the 13 colonies that rebelled against the British.

Early Political Institutions

Britain had difficulty exerting tight control over the colonies. The distance across the Atlantic was great enough that communication was slow. Further, Britain was often consumed by domestic upheavals and wars with France, so it paid little attention to the colonies. Because of these factors, self-rule began early in the colonies.

A Representative Assembly in Virginia The Virginia Company encouraged settlement by guaranteeing to settlers the same rights as residents of England had, including representation in lawmaking. In 1619, Virginia's colonists organized the first representative assembly in America, the **House of Burgesses**. It was dominated by elite planters.

Representative Government in New England Aboard the *Mayflower* in 1620, the Pilgrims drew up and signed a document in which they pledged to make decisions by the will of the majority. Known as the **Mayflower Compact**, this was an early form of self-government and a rudimentary written constitution.

Throughout New England, then, communities held town meetings to debate local decisions and to elect members to colonial legislatures. Voting rights were relatively broad for the time. In Massachusetts Bay Colony, all freemen—male members of the Puritan Church—had the right to elect the colony's governor and a representative assembly.

Limits to Colonial Democracy Despite these steps, most colonists other than male property owners were excluded from the political process. Females and landless males had few rights, indentured servants had practically no rights, and enslaved people had none. Many colonial governors ruled with autocratic or unlimited powers, answering only to the king or to those who provided the colonies' financial support. Thus, the gradual development of democratic ideas in the colonies coexisted with antidemocratic practices such as slavery and the widespread mistreatment of American Indians.

REFLECT ON THE LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Explain the forces, including the environment, that played a role in the growth of the British colonies during the period from 1607 to 1754.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

Religion (SOC)

Cecil Calvert, Lord
Baltimore

Act of Toleration

Roger Williams

Providence

Anne Hutchinson

antinomianism

Rhode Island

halfway covenant

Quakers

William Penn

Holy Experiment

Charter of Liberties (1701)

Crops (GEO)

rice-growing plantations

tobacco farms

Settlements (ARC)

Jamestown

Captain John Smith

John Rolfe

Pocahontas

Virginia

Plymouth Colony

Separatists

Pilgrims

Mayflower

Massachusetts Bay Colony

Puritans

John Winthrop

Great Migration

Thomas Hooker

John Davenport

Connecticut

New Hampshire

the Carolinas

New York

New Jersey

Pennsylvania

Delaware

Georgia

James Oglethorpe

Self-Rule (PCE)

Fundamental Orders of
Connecticut (1639)

Frame of Government
(1682–1683)

Virginia House of
Burgesses

Mayflower Compact

Authority (WOR)

corporate colonies

royal colonies

proprietary colonies

Virginia Company

Chesapeake colonies

joint-stock company

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Questions 1–3 refer to the following excerpt.

“Be it therefore ordered and enacted. . . . That whatsoever person or persons within this Province . . . shall henceforth blaspheme God, that is, curse Him or shall deny our Savior Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or shall deny the Holy Trinity . . . or the Godhead of any of the said Three persons of the Trinity or the Unity of the Godhead . . . shall be punished with death and confiscation or forfeiture of all his or her lands. . . . And whereas . . . that no person or persons whatsoever within this province, or the islands, ports, harbors, creeks, or havens thereunto belonging, professing to believe in Jesus Christ, shall from henceforth be any way troubled, molested or discountenanced for or in respect of his or her religion nor in free exercise thereof within this province or the islands thereunto belonging nor any way compelled to the belief or exercise of any other Religion against his or her consent.”

The Maryland Act of Toleration, 1649

1. The authors of the Maryland Act of Toleration were primarily trying to protect which of the following religious groups?
 - (A) Jews who faced antisemitism in Europe and in other colonies
 - (B) Quakers who were being attacked for their support of nonviolence and other beliefs
 - (C) Anglicans who had been persecuted in New England
 - (D) Roman Catholics who felt threatened by the growing number of Protestant settlers
2. Which of the following best summarizes the attitude toward religious beliefs expressed in this document?
 - (A) Individuals should be free to believe or not believe in God as they wish.
 - (B) Religion should be a personal matter that the government should not try to influence.
 - (C) Christians should be able to practice their faith without fear of persecution.
 - (D) The colony should be reserved for the one specific type of Christianity approved by the local government officials.
3. Which of the following colonies practiced greater religious toleration than the excerpt about Maryland calls for?
 - (A) Roger William's Rhode Island
 - (B) Thomas Hooker's Connecticut
 - (C) Anne Hutchinson's Portsmouth
 - (D) John Winthrop's Massachusetts

SHORT-ANSWER QUESTION

Use complete sentences; an outline or bulleted list alone is not acceptable.

1. Answer (a), (b), and (c).
 - (a) Briefly explain ONE way in which Puritanism influenced the development of New England from 1630 to 1685.
 - (b) Briefly explain another way in which Puritanism influenced the development of New England from 1630 to 1685.
 - (c) Briefly explain how ONE specific new colony in New England developed differently as a result of Puritanism during the period from 1630 to 1685.