

Growth of the Colonies

The Spanish were among the first Europeans to explore the New World and the first to settle in what is now the United States. European nations (England, France and Spain) came to the Americas to increase their wealth and broaden their influence over world affairs.

When the London Company sent out its first expedition to begin colonizing Virginia on December 20, 1606, it was by no means the first European attempt to exploit North America. In 1564, for example, French Protestants (Huguenots) built a colony near what is now Jacksonville, Florida. This intrusion did not go unnoticed by the Spanish, who had previously claimed the region. The next year, the Spanish established a military post at St. Augustine; Spanish troops soon wiped out the French interlopers residing but 40 miles away.

Meanwhile, Basque, English, and French fishing fleets became regular visitors to the coasts from Newfoundland to Cape Cod. Some of these fishing fleets even set up semi-permanent camps on the coasts to dry their catches and to trade with local people, exchanging furs for manufactured goods. For the next two decades, Europeans' presence in North America was limited to these semi-permanent incursions. Then in the 1580s, the English tried to plant a permanent colony on Roanoke Island (on the outer banks of present-day North Carolina), but their effort was short-lived.

In the early 1600s, in rapid succession, the English began a colony (Jamestown) in Chesapeake Bay in 1607, the French built Quebec in 1608, and the Dutch began their interest in the region that became present-day New York.

Within another generation, the Plymouth Company (1620), the Massachusetts Bay Company (1629), the Company of New France (1627), and the Dutch West India Company (1621) began to send thousands of colonists, including families, to North America. Successful colonization was not inevitable. Rather, interest in North America was a halting, yet global, contest among European powers to exploit these lands. (LOC)

By 1650, however, England had established a dominant presence on the Atlantic coast. The first colony was founded at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. Many of the people who settled in the New World came to escape religious persecution. The Pilgrims, founders of Plymouth, Massachusetts, arrived in 1620.

In both Virginia and Massachusetts, the colonists flourished with some assistance from Native Americans. New World grains such as corn kept the colonists from starving while, in Virginia, tobacco provided a valuable cash crop. By the early 1700s enslaved Africans made up a growing percentage of the colonial population.

Here is a list of the thirteen colonies (now states) with the year they were founded and some notes on their formation:

1. Virginia (1607) - John Smith and the London Company. This colony was named after Queen Elizabeth I, the "virgin queen" who married England instead of a husband. (West Virginia wasn't a separate state until 1861.)
2. New Hampshire (1623) - The settlement of New Hampshire did not happen because those who came were persecuted out of England. It was named by John Mason after the county of Hampshire in England (home of Jane Austen and Charles Dickens).



- Massachusetts (1630) - Puritans looking for religious freedom. It was named after an Algonquian tribe, the Massachusett, which translates to something along the lines of "people of the great hill" or "at the place of large hills," referring to the famous Blue Hills southwest of Boston.
- Maryland (1633) - George and Cecil Calvert as a safe haven for Catholics who were persecuted in England. Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, received a charter from Charles I of England and the colony was to be named after Charles' wife, Queen Henrietta Mary (she went by Queen Mary).

5. Connecticut (1636) - The Dutch were the first Europeans to reach Connecticut in 1614. But there were already Native Americans in what would become the Nutmeg State. The name Connecticut is derived from the Algonquian word "quinnehtukqut" that means "beside the long tidal river."
6. Rhode Island (1636) - Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrazzano in the early 16th century referred to an island near the mouth of Narragansett Bay that he compared to the Island of Rhodes in the Mediterranean. Some suggest Dutch explorer Adrian Block named it "Roodt Eylandt" meaning "red island" in reference to the red clay that lined the shore.
7. Delaware (1638) - The New Sweden Company was chartered and, in 1638, established The Colony of New Sweden at Fort Christina, in what is today Wilmington, Delaware. British took over in 1664. The bay, river, colony and now state were named in 1610 by English explorer Samuel Argall (1580-1626) in honor of Virginia's governor, Thomas West, Lord De La Warr.
8. North Carolina (1663) - Beginning in 1712, there were separate and distinct governments of the northeastern and southwestern parts of Carolina, and they were referred to as North and South Carolina. Each received separate royal colonies in 1729. Named after King Charles I. The Latin version of Charles is "Carolus," from which "Carolina" is derived.
9. South Carolina (1663) - Beginning in 1712, there were separate and distinct governments of the northeastern and southwestern parts of Carolina, and they were referred to as North and South Carolina. Each received separate royal colonies in 1729. Named after King Charles I. The Latin version of Charles is "Carolus," from which "Carolina" is derived.
10. New York (1664) - Originally founded by the Dutch (1614), it became a British colony in 1664. It was originally called New Netherland when the Dutch founded it — when the British took over in 1664 it received its present name that honors King Charles II's brother, the Duke of York and Albany. (The word York comes from the Latin word for city.)
11. New Jersey (1664) - The Dutch, Swedes, and Finns were the first European settlers in New Jersey. First settled by the Dutch, the English took over in 1664. In 1664 the Dutch lost New Netherlands when the British took control of the land and added it to their colonies. It was named for the island of Jersey in the English Channel in honor of Sir George Carteret. (Carteret had been governor of the Isle of Jersey.)
12. Pennsylvania (1681) - The Swedes and Dutch were the first European settlers. In May of 1680, William Penn petitioned King Charles II for land in the New World. Penn wished to call the land "New Wales," or simply "Sylvania," Latin for "woods." King Charles II insisted that "Penn" precede the word "Sylvania", in honor of William's late father to create "Pennsylvania", or "Penn's Woods."
13. Georgia (1732) - In the 1730s, England founded the last of its colonies in North America. The four-fold purpose in founding Georgia were to provide relief of the poor; to build a buffer colony against the Spaniards in Florida and the French in Louisiana; to promote trade of Great Britain; and to provide refuge for persecuted Protestants (and carry Christianity to the 'Indians'). Georgia is named for King George II. King George granted the charter in 1732, stipulating that the territory bear his name. (The -ia suffix means 'state of' and comes from the Greek language.)

Growth in the Colonies

It took from 1607 to 1630 to reach a combined estimated population of 4,646 in six colonies: Maine, New Hampshire, Plymouth, Massachusetts, New York, and Virginia.

By 1640, new settlements had been placed or developed in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Maryland, bringing the colonial population to 26,634. It nearly doubled to 50,358 by mid-century, with one new colony established in Delaware.

During the next three decades, the colonies of Carolina, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania were established. Maine joined with Massachusetts. Total estimated population of the colonies reached 151,507 in 1680. Of these, Negroes numbered 6,971, of which some 3,000 were in Virginia. (The word "Negro" is used in the Census Bureau's statistical tables.)

In the last two decades of the century, no new colonies were established. Plymouth merged with Massachusetts in 1691. The population of the colonies grew to 250,888 in 1700, of which Negroes numbered 16,729 (11.2 percent), as slavery provided labor for tobacco and other plantations.

The first American century consisted of coastal, sparsely populated settlements. For purposes of comparison with the mother country, the population of England in 1607 has been estimated at 4,303,043, rising modestly to 5,026,877 in 1700. During the 1600s, England encouraged migration to the colonies to help ward off French ambitions in the new world.

After an initial period of high mortality, the colonists soon acclimated to their new circumstances. Better economic conditions and the absence of wars and violent religious disputes attracted thousands of European migrants, freemen and indentured servants alike. The colonists enjoyed greater abundance and variety in their diets.

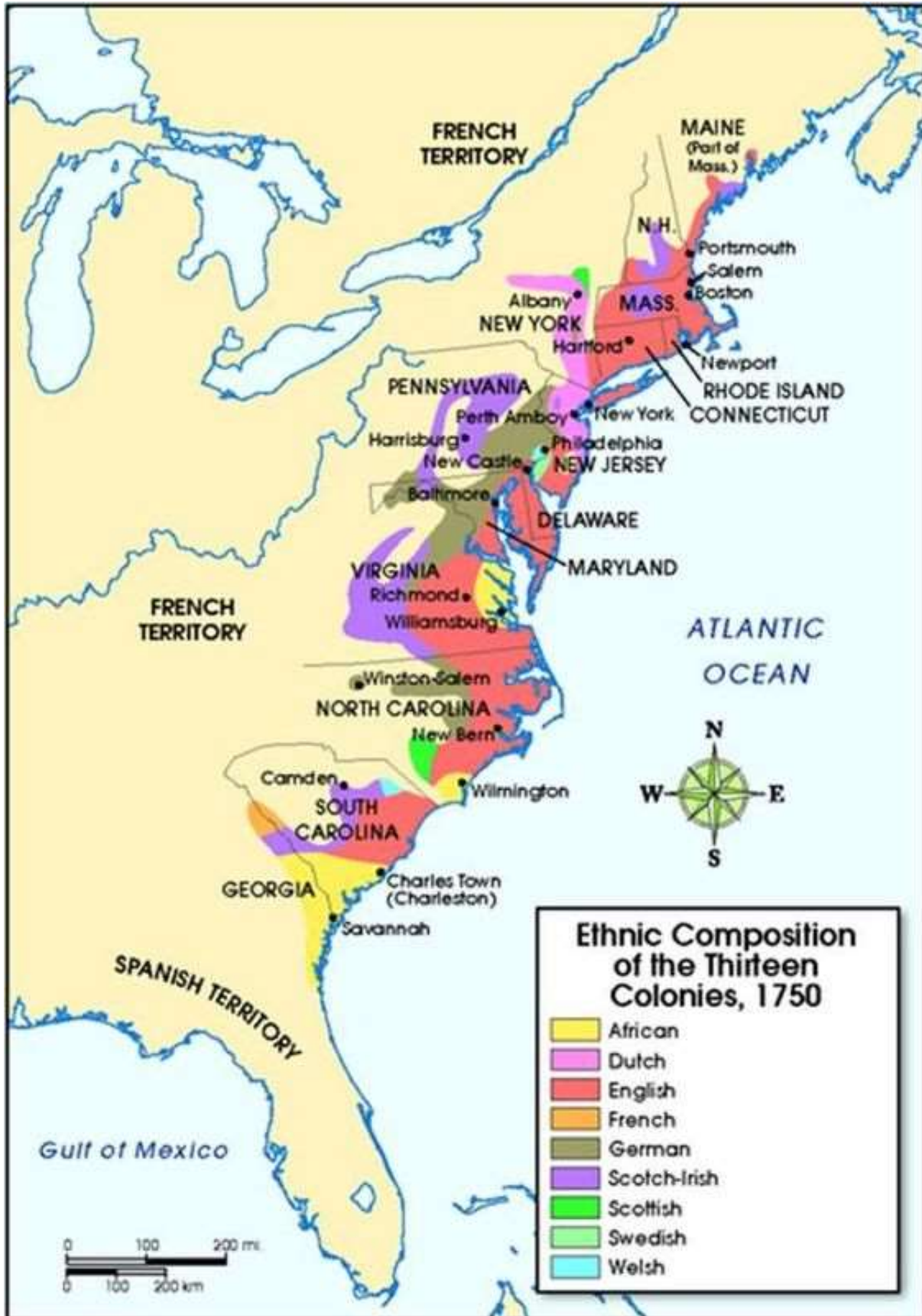
Low densities and dispersed settlements minimized the spread of communicable diseases and epidemics. Abundant forests provided heating fuel. Infant mortality rates quickly fell below those in Europe. A typical colonial family had eight children, double that of England and Europe. By 1700, colonial women routinely lived into their sixties despite risks of death in childbirth.

By the mid-1600s, the colonies were fast becoming lands of opportunity.

About three-quarters of the colonists were farmers. A typical farm often exceeded 100 acres. Farmers produced surpluses of grain that rivaled the output of tobacco. A colonial adult farmer consumed 150-200 pounds of meat a year; most corn was fed to livestock. Farm families supplemented agricultural work with handicraft production.

Most farmers owned their land. To encourage immigration, colonists often received free or almost free land. Land was readily available at low prices, and new land was accessible on the frontier. Many tenants acquired their own land after a short period of tenancy, a change in status that was virtually impossible in Europe.

Most immigrants and native-born colonists enjoyed ample opportunity to acquire property. Upon completing terms of indenture, on average four years in duration, servants often received plots of land on which to begin their lives as freemen. Many became successful farmers and acquired servants of their own. It has been estimated that from half to two-thirds of all migrants to the colonies came as indentured servants, though servants rarely exceeded a tenth of the colonial population at any one time.



Grants of land were frequently used as a means of payment to ministers and other officials, which helped to keep taxes low. In his *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith cited plenty of good land and liberty as the two great causes of colonial prosperity.

The remaining colonists were skilled or unskilled artisans, day laborers, and seamen who congregated in villages, towns, and port cities. A few became merchants or large planters. Colonial workers earned 2-3 shillings a day, double to triple the wages of their English counterparts. Colonial seamen also fared better. Desertion from English crews to work on colonial ships was widespread. (Hoover)

In 1700, there were about 250,000 European settlers and enslaved Africans in North America's English colonies.

By 1750, some 80 per cent of the North American continent was controlled or influenced by France or Spain. Their presence was a source of tension and paranoia among those in the 13 British colonies, who feared encirclement, invasion and the influence of Catholicism.

There was a huge increase in population in America during the 1700s

- In 1700 there were 300,000 people in America; 20,000 blacks
- By 1775 there were 2.5 million people in America; 500,000 were black
- 400,000 were new immigrants; an additional 400,000 were black slaves
- The rest was due to the natural fertility of Americans; colonists doubled their numbers every 25 years

Information here is primarily from *Outline of US History*, Alonzo L Hamby; *Captain John Smith (1579-1631)*, Rossiter Johnson; *Thirteen Colonies*, Jennifer Llewellyn/Steve Thompson; Hoover Institute; History-com

In an effort to provide a brief, informal background summary of various people, places and events related to the American Revolution, I made this informal compilation from a variety of sources. This is not intended to be a technical reference document, nor an exhaustive review of the subject. Rather, it is an assemblage of information and images from various sources on basic background information. For ease in informal reading, in many cases, specific quotations and citations and attributions are often not included – however, sources are noted in the summary. The images and text are from various sources and are presented for personal, noncommercial and/or educational purposes. Thanks, Peter T. Young