

Introduction



Viking

People have lived in the Americas for thousands of years. The first Americans left no records. Researchers are still trying to determine when the first people reached the Americas.

About the year 1,000 A.D. the Vikings had reached North America. The news of their voyages did not spread to other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. However, in the Renaissance period, European nations had begun to look overseas to explore. Sailors from many nations explored the world in the 1500s and 1600s.

Pre-Columbian Era

Historians call the time before *Christopher Columbus* landed at Santo Domingo in the Caribbean Sea the **pre-Columbian era** in the New World. Research indicates that more than one group of settlers crossed over to the Americas perhaps as early as 30,000 to 40,000 years ago. Most historians agree that Asians crossed a **land bridge** that connected the Siberian region of Russia in Asia with Alaska and Canada in North America (see map on next page).



Christopher Columbus

Asians crossed the frozen water and land where the Bering Strait is today and traveled south, settling throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico, Central America, and South America.

Other researchers think that an earlier group of people may have crossed the Atlantic from Europe's Iberian Peninsula—the area that is now Spain, Portugal, and southwestern France. These explorers are believed to have originally settled the Eastern Seaboard, eventually going as far as the American deserts and Canadian tundra, and perhaps into South America. This theory is still being researched.

The movement of groups to the Americas involved many different peoples over many periods of time. The environment of the areas where different groups settled dictated how they developed into different tribes and civilizations. When Columbus arrived in the New World, millions of

Native Americans lived in what today is called the United States. Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest (Washington and Oregon) adapted to wet weather and extensive waterways relied on fishing and hunting for survival. In the dry Southwest region in New Mexico and Arizona, the Hopi, Pueblo, and other tribes of the region irrigated their tribal farmlands while living in homes made of **adobe**. The Northeast region of the United States (Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, and other states) provided a densely wooded area where Native Americans hunted game and gathered nuts and berries. Native Americans who lived in the Southeastern region (the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida) enjoyed good farming in the fertile soil and also hunted.



Crossing the Land Bridge to North America

During the pre-Columbian era, the Native Americans of North America traded with each other for items they needed. Some tribes traded vegetables and fish for animal hides and tools made of bone. The one thing that the Native Americans of North America did not trade was land. Most tribes lived communally, working together for the community and not just themselves; they did not have strong ideas of personal ownership.

With the arrival of the Genoese explorer, Columbus, his men, and his ships in the Caribbean in 1492, Europe learned of the New World. In reality, the New World (North America and South America) was not unknown, only unknown to Europe. During this time period, an estimated 43-65 million Native Americans may have lived in both North and South America.

Columbus thought he had reached the East Indies, so he called the people he met *Indians*. These Native Americans were descended from the people who reached America thousands of years ago.

Columbus is remembered and credited with the discovery of the New World in 1492. However, Columbus was not the first European to visit the shores of North America. More than 500 years earlier, in 1,000 A.D., *Leif Ericson*, a Norse explorer on a voyage from Greenland, visited the continent.

Columbus Opens the Door for Exploration

As the 15th century came to an end, Columbus made several voyages to the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico. He was searching for a shortcut to Asia, his original goal. Later explorers who were still searching for this shortcut called it the **Northwest Passage**. Europe owned both the technology and the resources for safe passage to and from the New World. Kings and queens funded exploration. The printing press was used to publish stories about the findings of explorers. The stories spread quickly, encouraging other nations to strive for the same success.





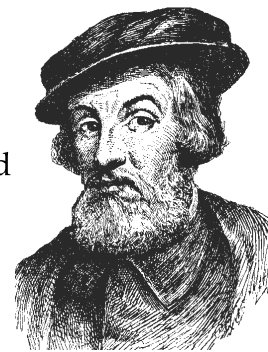
Hernando de Soto

Throughout the 16th century (1501-1600), the Spanish dominated exploration and colonization of the Americas. Beyond the Caribbean, the Spanish explorer *Hernán Cortés* conquered the Native Americans of modern day Mexico. Next, Spanish explorer *Francisco Vázquez de Coronado* set out to explore the

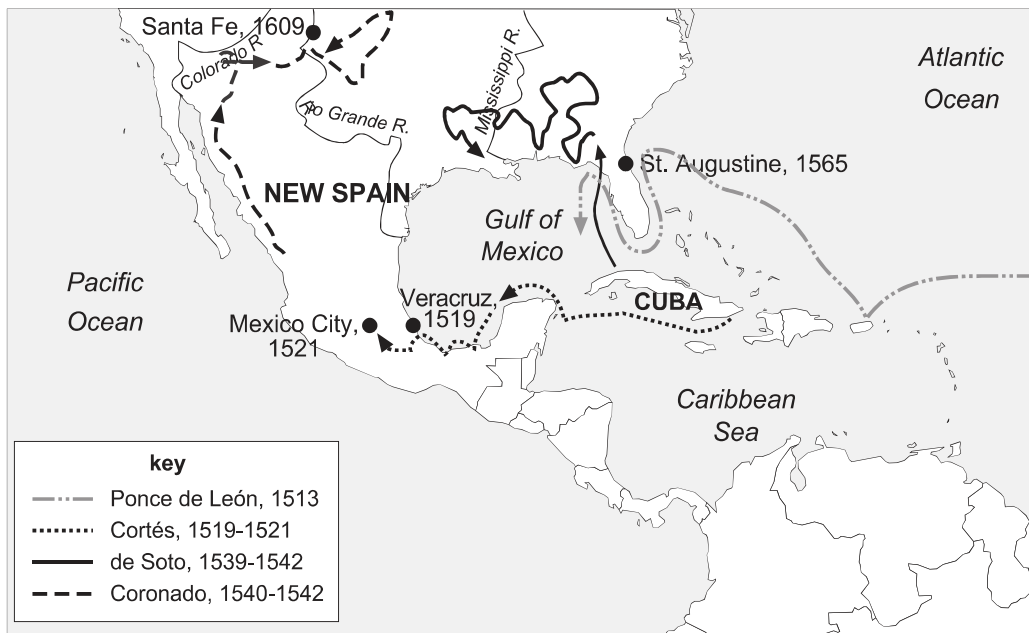
northern area of Mexico and the southwestern area of what would become the United States (California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada). On the east coast the Spanish explorer *Juan Ponce de León* searched for the Fountain of Youth and discovered Florida. In 1565 the Spanish established St. Augustine. This settlement survived to become the oldest European-founded city in the present-day United States. Further exploration of the southeast was done by Spanish explorer *Hernando de Soto* and his men as they traveled through Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi to the Mississippi River.



Juan Ponce de León



Hernán Cortés



Early Spanish Explorations

The Spanish military leaders, called **conquistadors**, conquered the Native Americans of South America and took their riches for Spain. The Spanish forced the Native Americans to mine for gold and silver, and then these riches were taken to Spain. As other countries heard of the riches and saw the benefits to Spain they wanted to do the same.

British North America Is Colonized

England set out to establish colonies along the eastern coast of North America. The English goal was to follow in Spain's footsteps, to conquer the Native Americans, and to force them to mine for gold, silver, and other riches that would be sent to England. The first English colony failed. **Roanoke Island**, the Lost Colony, was established on an island off the northeast coast of North Carolina in 1587. The founder, Sir *Walter Raleigh*, was delayed in bringing supplies to the colony because he helped defend England from an attack by the Spanish. When Raleigh finally reached the island three years later in 1590, no one was left. Nobody ever discovered what happened to them.



Sir Walter Raleigh

Jamestown, England's first surviving colony in British North America, was founded in 1607 at Jamestown, Virginia. It was named for *King James I* of England. A group of investors bought the right to establish a colony from the king. These investors formed a **joint-stock company** called the *Virginia Company*, which permitted numerous investors to pool their wealth to fund colonies and share in any profits. Joint-stock companies were very important because they financed many of the colonial expeditions. The investors in the Virginia Company hoped that gold would be discovered as it had in New Spain (in what is today's Mexico) so they would get a quick return on their investment.

Jamestown never experienced the success of the Spanish colonies. Like Roanoke, the colony nearly disappeared because its colonists were not prepared to work for their own survival. English gentlemen were sent to start the colony, and they did not know

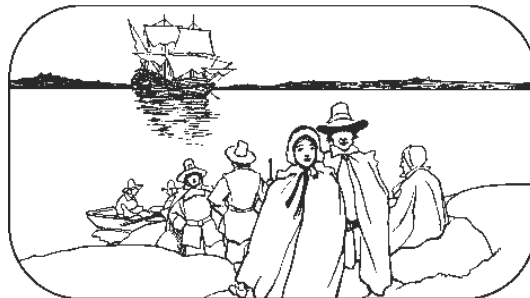


English gentlemen were sent to start the colony of Jamestown, but they did not know how to establish a successful settlement.

how to work together. The first several winters saw the population of Jamestown shrink and nearly disappear. Jamestown was saved when Captain *John Smith* took over in 1607 and demanded that all the colonists work for the benefit of all.

John Smith went to nearby Native American villages to trade for food. He was captured by the chief, **Powhatan** (pow-uh-TÁN) and was sentenced to death. **Pocahontas** (poh-kuh-HÓNN-tuss), the chief's 12-year-old daughter, begged her father to spare him. Powhatan agreed and even sold corn to Smith to feed the hungry colonists at Jamestown. Life in the colony improved when colonists began planting crops. However, in 1609, John Smith was injured in an accident. After he returned to England, the colony again fell on hard times. The winter of 1609-1610 was known as the **starving time** because so many people died without enough food to eat.

Less than half the original colonists survived to see a relief ship with supplies and newcomers arrive from England in the spring of 1610. Discouraged by the harsh living conditions and gloomy outlook, the colonists and newcomers were ready to pack up and go back to England. They were convinced to stay, and in 1619 the Virginia Company put new leaders in charge of the colony.



The Virginia Company sent a governor with orders to consult the settlers. The settlers who owned land were allowed to elect *burgesses*, or



representatives. The burgesses met in an assembly called the *House of Burgesses* and with the governor, made laws for the colony. The House of Burgesses brought representative government to the English colonies. Settlers now felt they had a say in how they were governed.

The burgesses had the power to make strict rules and laws, and Jamestown again began to grow. The English eventually realized they would not find gold or silver in Virginia. With the food and the support of the nearby **Powhatan** peoples, the English learned what crops could grow in the



local climate. They learned from the Native Americans that the Virginia soil was excellent for growing tobacco, which the colonists called *brown gold*. In 1612, *John Rolfe* cross-bred tobacco seeds from South America with native American seeds. The demand for tobacco provided the colonists with the cash crop they needed to build the colony. By 1619 the Virginia colony was well on its way to success. Tobacco farms grew throughout the Chesapeake Bay area, creating a demand for farm workers.

Many people wanted to come to America but were too poor to pay for their passage. Thousands of men, women, and children came to America as **indentured servants** to work on tobacco farms. Indentured servants were people who promised to work for others for a certain number of years, usually two to seven, in return for passage to the colonies and food and shelter upon arrival. Indentured servants were usually from the lower classes of English society and had little to lose by leaving England. At the end of their indenture, some were given clothes, tools, land, and their freedom. They then supported themselves as farmers, merchants, and craft workers. Some indentured servants became very successful and rose to positions of respect in the colonies.

In 1619 a Dutch merchant ship with 20 Africans aboard, originally headed for South America as slaves for the mines, landed off course in Jamestown. These Africans became indentured servants and after a few years most of them received land and freedom. Eventually, more Africans were brought to help with the difficult farming of tobacco. However, it would be several decades before the English colonists began the systematic use of Africans for slave labor and came up with the idea of **chattel** slavery, where enslaved human beings are considered property.

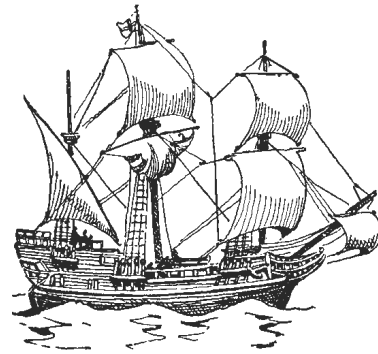
New England Colonies Formed for Religious Reasons

Plymouth Colony

In September of 1620, 102 **Pilgrims** set sail from England on a ship named the *Mayflower*, heading for Virginia. Blown off course, they instead landed at Plymouth, along the coast of what would later become the state of Massachusetts. These colonists established the second permanent colony

in America and the first in New England. Not all colonies were formed for commercial reasons. Plymouth was different from Jamestown because the Pilgrims came to the New World for religious freedom.

When the colonists aboard the *Mayflower* arrived, they realized they were outside of the area they were granted by the king. Before leaving the ship, the colonists signed a document called the **Mayflower Compact** (see Appendix A). This agreement created the basic legal system for the colony with the settlers agreeing to **democratic** rule, or rule by the group. They also promised to support the king and pay back the joint-stock company that paid for their journey. The Mayflower Compact helped establish the important idea of **consent of the governed**, where the people make decisions. The Mayflower Compact was the first document of self-



the *Mayflower*

government in North America and is part of the foundation of government for the United States.



Weakened by **scurvy** and malnutrition, more than half of the Pilgrims perished that first winter. Like the colonists at Jamestown, the Pilgrims were given help by Native Americans. Their greatest help came from *Squanto*, a Native American who had learned to speak English after having been held captive by traders who took him to England years before. Squanto provided corn to plant and instructions on how to grow it. In spring the colonists planted crops and had a good harvest in the fall which helped them survive the coming winter and succeed as a colony.

Massachusetts Bay Colony

Another group who sought religious freedom were the **Puritans**. Like the Pilgrims, the Puritans were also unhappy with the Church of England. Unlike the Pilgrims, the Puritans did not want to separate from the Church, but wanted to purify its religious practices. However, Church authorities rejected their ideas, and they were **persecuted** for their beliefs. In March of 1630, a group of these Puritans left England and settled 40

miles north of the Plymouth Colony. They called their colony the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Its capital was Boston.

The Puritans brought with them the tools, supplies, and skilled workers to establish good English-style farms and villages. Because of this planning, there was no *starving time* in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. From 1630 to nearly 1650 thousands of Puritans left England to settle near Plymouth. This period is called the *Great Migration*. As more people arrived from England, they began to spread out and create new communities or colonies all throughout the New England region. Gradually, the Puritans created colonies at New Haven, in what later became the state of Connecticut, and Providence, in what later became the state of Rhode Island.



The Great English Migration, 1630-1650

Other Colonies

Even though religious toleration and acceptance were among the reasons the Puritans migrated to New England, the Puritans were not tolerant of other religions. Their intolerance led to the founding of other colonies by people looking for religious freedom. *Roger Williams* and *Anne Hutchinson* were both **banished** by the Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for criticizing the colony's policies and leadership. In 1636 Williams founded the town of Providence (in what became Rhode Island), and it became a safe place for followers of all religions. In 1638 Anne Hutchinson and her followers also moved to Rhode Island and established other towns. In 1644 Williams obtained a charter from England, and the town of Providence and three others became the colony of Rhode Island.



During the 17th century, many people left Europe for British North America and created colonies. Swedes settled in the Delaware region, the Dutch in New York. Eventually, the English were able to take over these colonies. The colonies of Pennsylvania and the Carolinas were created when the king of England granted land to people who had supported him.

The Three Regions of the Thirteen Colonies

New England Colonies

Because of geography, the colonies developed differently. Heavily forested New England was located in a mountainous region and along the Eastern seaboard. Therefore, the people of the New England colonies (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) sold lumber and fished the coastal waters for their survival. Gradually, a **commercial economy** developed, supporting many merchants. Shipbuilding became one of the greatest industries of the area.

Southern Colonies

The geography of the Southern colonies (Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia) led to the development of an **agrarian economy**. Agrarian economies grow food crops or **cash crops**, which are sold for profits. The most successful products in the southern colonies were tobacco, rice, and indigo (used as a dye to color cloth). Later cotton would be very successful in the fertile, flat land of the coastal south.



clearing the land for farming

The cash crops of the southern colonies required a great deal of labor. *Plantations*, or large farms owned by one person, were created throughout the region. Indentured servants and later slaves provided labor for working the fields. As plantations were started along the rivers, cities or towns sprang up at the coastal port cities, where goods were shipped to England in exchange for manufactured goods brought to the colonies.

Middle Colonies

The Middle Colonies (Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York) provided a varied economy. With fertile land, these colonies became the **breadbasket** of the colonies because they provided much of the food for other colonies, especially during the American Revolution. The port cities of New York City and Philadelphia became important merchant centers where goods were shipped in and out.



COLONY	DATE FOUNDED	LEADER	REASONS FOUNDED
New England Colonies			
Massachusetts Plymouth Massachusetts Bay	1620 1630	William Bradford John Winthrop	Religious freedom Religious freedom
New Hampshire	1622	Ferdinando Gorges John Mason	Profit from trade and fishing
Connecticut Hartford New Haven	1636 1639	Thomas Hooker	Expand trade; religious and political freedom
Rhode Island	1636	Roger Williams	Religious freedom
Southern Colonies			
Virginia	1607	John Smith	Trade and farming
Maryland	1632	Lord Baltimore	Profit from land sales; religious and political freedom
The Carolinas North Carolina South Carolina	1663 1712 1712	Group of eight proprietors	Trade and farming; religious freedom
Georgia	1732	James Oglethorpe	Profit; home for debtors; buffer against Spanish in Florida
Middle Colonies			
New York	1626	Peter Minuit	Expand trade
Delaware	1638	Swedish settlers	Expand trade
New Jersey	1664	John Berkeley George Carteret	Profit from land sales; religious and political freedom
Pennsylvania	1681	William Penn	Profit from land sales; religious and political freedom

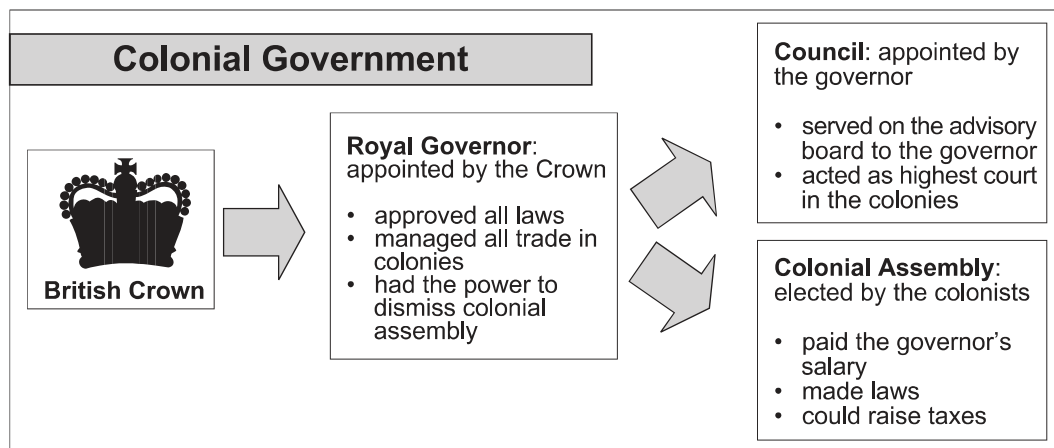
British Colonial Policy

British colonies were important to England because they either provided desired luxuries such as sugar and tobacco or served as markets for goods produced in England. The American colonies served England mostly as a market for their goods. Because England owned the colonies, England could create laws defining what the colonists had to buy from England and what they could sell to other countries. These laws were called the *Navigation Acts*. The Navigation Acts passed by the English Parliament in 1651 tightened control of trade between the colonies by setting **tariffs** (taxes or duties) on imports. These laws required colonists

to limit their production of iron products so they would buy products made in England. They also required colonists to pay tariffs on certain products. All goods shipped to or from the colonies were to be transported on British ships and had to stop in England before going anywhere else. A tax on the goods was paid to the English government.

To make sure the colonists followed the Navigation Acts, England established **vice-admiralty courts**, or military courts, with no juries. England felt colonial juries would always side with their neighbors and ignore the law and England.

From the 1640s through the 1680s, the English had problems at home. From 1689 to 1763, England fought four wars against the French on battlefields across the world. With much of her attention focused on fighting France, England began to pay less attention to her American colonies. This was known as **salutary neglect**, a time when England ignored the colonies by relaxing its regulations. During this period, American colonies grew strong and independent with little help from England because they had to make decisions on their own. One result of salutary neglect was the development of *colonial assemblies*, where the colonists helped make decisions with representatives of the king.



After the **French and Indian War**, fought from 1754 to 1763, England again turned its attention to its colonies as a source for paying off war debts. These financial demands would set England and the colonies on a collision course. The colonies would declare their independence 13 years later.

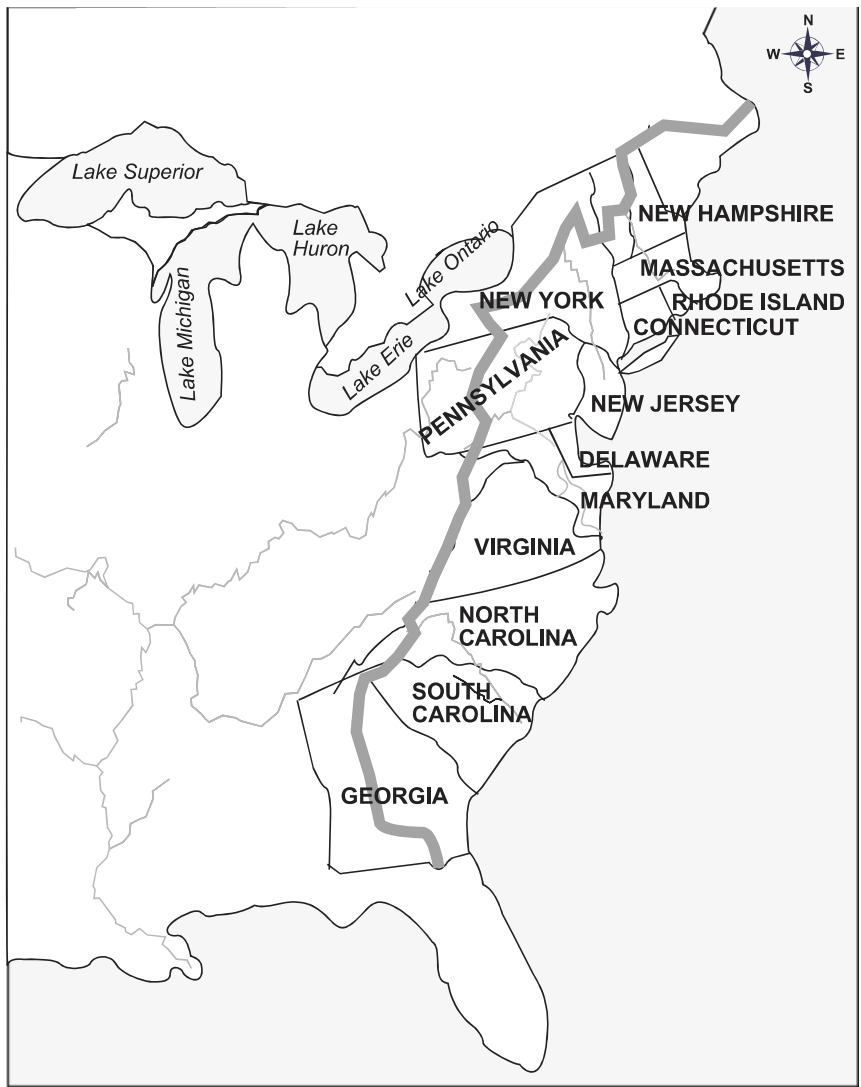
Summary

Native Americans developed many different cultural regions in North America before 1492. After the discovery of the New World, Europeans claimed large parts of the Americas for Portugal, Spain, France, and England.

Both Spain and France built large empires in the Americas in the 1500s. In the 1600s and 1700s, England set up 13 colonies in North America. Colonists came to America for various reasons, which included religious, political, and economic freedom. Each colony had its own government and each differed from the others in part because of geography. The New England, Middle, and Southern colonies each had their own way of life. Trade and travel between the colonies helped colonists learn about one another.

England owned the colonies and could create laws and tariffs that controlled what colonists bought from England, could sell to other countries, and could trade between the colonies. During the French and Indian War, England was too busy to pay much attention to the colonies. The colonies were forced to become independent and make their own decisions. Colonial assemblies with a representative government developed. This independence would be hard to give up when England once again turned its attention to the colonies.





The Original Thirteen Colonies in the Mid-1700s