

Climate of the Three Colonies

NEW ENGLAND

The New England colonies were further north and therefore had longer colder winters than other colonies. The soil in New England was full of large rocks. It was difficult to find large plots of land that could be used for crops. These are the two main reasons people in New England seldom became serious farmers.

Because New England was covered with trees, people in New England used the trees for lumber and to build ships. Ships were used to fish or to hunt for whales. New England is the closest group of colonies to the Grand Banks. With many ships, New England became the leader in ocean shipping/commerce.

The Puritan religion was the center of life in New England. (Puritans in America eventually became Congregationalists.) Puritans believed that God would reward "hard working people". They built meeting houses in the centers of their cities. These were used for church as well as town meetings. All men who were church members and property owners could speak and vote at town meetings.

THE MIDDLE COLONIES

The Middle Colonies had a milder climate and much better soil than New England. Settlers in the Middle Colonies had come from the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden, France, and Scotland. (Some people called the Middle Colonies the Melting Pot.)

The Middle Colonies were well suited for small farms, and thus, became known as the "Bread Basket" because of all the grains (wheat, oats, barley, rye) that were grown in the Middle Colonies and then shipped to Philadelphia and New York.

As Philadelphia and New York grew as trading centers, manufacturing increased. Philadelphia also became an important shipbuilding center.

THE SOUTHERN COLONIES

The climate in the Southern Colonies was the warmest of the English colonies. The warm climate made it possible to grow crops throughout the year. The land was flat and the soil was rich. Tobacco and rice were the two most important cash crops. The climate was ideally suited for plantations where slaves did the manual labor.

Most of the southerners were from England, so the church of choice was the Anglican church. Taxes were paid to this church.

Family Life, Role of Women, and Social Classes

The head of the house was the father. He made the rules. Women had few rights. They could not vote. A woman needed permission from her father or husband to own land, go into business, or to sign a contract.

There were four social classes. The wealthy and well educated made up the upper class. Small business owners, farmers, and artisans made up the middle class, the largest class. The lower class included servants and farm workers. The lowest of all were the slaves, who had the fewest rights. Slaves were considered property