

## The Thirteen Original Colonies

### (1607) Virginia

Based on George Weymouth's accounts of voyages to the New England area in 1606, two private companies were formed to seek a patent for colonization on the Atlantic Coast. One of these companies was called the London Company and it was given the southern Virginia territory. The other company was called the Plymouth Company and its patent was for northern Virginia. Both companies quickly sought to exercise their patents but the London Company was the first to actually place colonists on the shore. In 1607, 105 London Company sponsored settlers arrived from England to begin the story that we all remember from our school days. Since they were there representing England and its King, James I, they settled in an encampment they called Jamestown on a river they named the James River.



The first year was devastating for the colonists, with only 32 colonists surviving the winter and only then because Native Americans living in the area came to their aid with food. After a supply ship arrived the next year they had additional provisions but many more colonists to feed as well. Once again, over the winter, most of the colonists died of starvation and from hostile encounters with their neighbors. As winter came to a close, ships arrived, and most of them were ready to leave. But as they were leaving, Lord Thomas de la Warr (Delaware is named after him) arrived from England with new supplies and more settlers. He refused to let the survivors return to England. Slowly, as they reached agreements with the local Native American tribes and they learned how to grow some of their own crops, the colony began to prosper.

Most of those original Jamestown settlers were after profit, mainly riches in the form of gold and other precious metals. They had not given enough thought to the perils that they would face in this unknown land. One of the settlers, however, was familiar with hardship and was committed to Jamestown's survival. Capt. John Smith was a soldier and adventurer. He had fought in France and Hungary, been captured and escaped. Although his personality caused him some initial problems with the other colonists (he arrived in Jamestown in chains after alienating the leaders of the expedition) he eventually made contact with the local Native American chieftain Powhatan, who provided the colonists with much of their food in that first year. Capt. Smith was eventually even appointed leader of the colony.

One of Powhatan's children, a daughter called Pocahontas, visited the colonists in the early years and even brought food and other provisions to them. Several years later in an attempt to obtain bargaining advantage over Powhatan the colonists kidnapped Pocahontas and she stayed with them in Jamestown. A colonist, John Rolfe (who incidentally was the first of the colonists to cultivate commercial quality tobacco and start the Colony on its way towards profitability) eventually married her and took her to England. She died as they were preparing to return to Virginia.

In 1619 a group of 20 African slaves arrived in Jamestown on a Dutch ship.

Grouped with the Southern Colonies, Virginia started out as a Corporate colony (granted by Royal charter to a Company of investors who have governing rights) but in 1624 became a Royal colony (subject to the governing authority of the granting Royalty).

In 1676 the village of Jamestown was nearly destroyed during "Bacon's Rebellion."

In 1788 Virginia was the tenth state to ratify the Constitution and recommended the Bill of Rights be added.

## (1620) Massachusetts

In 1607, about the same time as the Jamestown colonization, a group of English colonists attempted to establish a colony in the Northern Virginia territory. The colony, a fort named Fort St. George, was located in present day Maine and was named [Popham](#) after its leader George Popham. It lasted for approximately a year before the discouraged settlers returned to England.



The Pilgrims were the first English colonists to permanently settle in New England in what we now know as Massachusetts. On Sept. 16, 1620 the ship "[Mayflower](#)" set off from Plymouth, England on its journey to the New World. There were 102 passengers on the Mayflower including 41 Christian Puritan Separatists known collectively as the Leiden group. After spending many years in Holland exiled from the English Church, the Puritans were seeking a new life of religious freedom in America. All 102 of the passengers were referred to as the "Pilgrims" after they arrived. The group had obtained a Patent from the London Virginia Company which indentured them into service for the Company for seven years after they arrived and settled. To prepare for their life in America, they had sought advice from people who had already visited the New World. Among their advisors was Captain John Smith who, earlier, had helped found Jamestown for the Virginia Company. It took sixty six days to reach New England and the journey was very hard for these non-seafarers. When they arrived they anchored off the tip of Cape Cod, in an area now known as Massachusetts, and before they even set foot on shore they wrote, and all the men signed, an agreement called the "[Mayflower Compact](#)" that would set the rules to guide them through the early, hard times of establishing a new community. The Compact, which was signed on November 21, 1620 (modern date, see [note](#) below.), served as the official Constitution of the Plymouth Colony for many years.

For nearly a month they explored, by foot and in boats, the area around Cape Cod using the maps they had obtained in England. During their exploration they had a few minor encounters with the local natives. Finally, on December 21, they decided on a location near Plymouth Harbor which they named Plymouth. Nearly half of the colonists and crew died from illnesses that first winter as they struggled to build their town. The following spring they were visited by a local [Wampanoag](#) native named Samoset who, surprisingly, spoke some broken English. Eventually he introduced the settlers to another native named Squanto who's village had occupied the area before the Pilgrims arrived. Squanto had been kidnapped by English explorers and while he was in Europe the rest of his people had all been killed by diseases brought by European explorers. Squanto spoke English very well and he stayed with the

Pilgrims and taught them many valuable skills that enabled them to survive in their new country. He also played a very big part in bringing the Pilgrims and the local native population together, leading, eventually to a long, but restless, peace.

Not long after the Pilgrims arrived in Plymouth (1628) the Puritans came to Massachusetts and settled Naumkeag (later called Salem). John Winthrop, carrying the Massachusetts Bay Charter, arrived in 1630 and founded Boston. Maine was annexed to Massachusetts in 1652 and later the Plymouth Colony was too.

The relationship between the Native tribes and the colonists in New England was always strained but generally didn't result in much bloodshed. In 1637 colonists, with the cooperation of several local tribes, mounted a devastating attack on a tribe known as the Pequots and then, in 1675, the long accord that had existed between the New England colonists and the local native tribes came apart in a bloody war known as King Phillip's War after the leader of the Wampanoag tribe, Metacomet, who was also known by his English nickname "King Phillip". Metacomet was the son of Massasoit the Wampanoag leader who had originally greeted the Plymouth settlers.

Massachusetts was a New England colony which started out as a Corporate colony but became a Royal colony in 1691

In 1788 Massachusetts was the sixth state to ratify the Constitution.

### **(1623) New Hampshire**

In 1623 two groups of English settlers, sent by Captain John Mason, arrived in what is now called New Hampshire (after John Mason's home County of Hampshire) and established a fishing village near the mouth of the Piscataqua River. New Hampshire would remain an English colony throughout the colonial period even though, at various times, it came under Massachusetts jurisdiction. *[Note from the webmaster: Thanks to an alert reader, this is newly added information for New Hampshire (11/03/05).]*

In 1638, John Wheelwright, banished from Boston for defending his sister-in-law Anne Hutchinson, founded a settlement called Exeter in New Hampshire. In 1639 the settlers signed the "[Exeter Compact](#)" patterned after the "Mayflower Compact".

One of the New England Colonies, New Hampshire started out as a Proprietary colony but it became a Royal colony in 1679.

In 1719 Scots-Irish settlers from Londonderry, Ireland were sent to form a "Scottish" settlement in New Hampshire named for their town of origin.

In 1788 New Hampshire was the ninth state to ratify the Constitution after which it was officially adopted.

## **(1623) New Jersey**

Along with their holdings in New York, New Jersey was originally settled in 1623 by the Dutch as [New Netherlands](#) .

In 1664, after obtaining control of Dutch holdings lying between Virginia and New England, the Duke of York made a proprietary grant to Sir George Carteret and Lord Berkeley, of the land between the Hudson and the Delaware River. These men intended to profit from real estate sales. The new grant was named New Jersey for Carteret, who was governor of the Isle of Jersey.

One of the Middle Colonies, New Jersey started out as a Proprietary colony but in 1702 it was granted a Royal charter

New Jersey, in 1787, was the third state to ratify the Constitution.

## **(1624) New York**

Although the Dutch West India Co. explored and began to settle the New York area as early as 1614, the principal occupation of the area did not occur until 1624 when Dutch settlers arrived at Governors Island and then spread to other areas in the region. In 1626, as we all remember from our early history lessons, Peter Minuit arrived on Manhattan Island and, with other Dutch settlers, bought the island from the local Indians for 60 gilders (\$24.) worth of goods. The settlement and fort on the island became known as New Amsterdam which eventually became the City of New York. The Dutch holdings in the area were collectively called New Netherlands and included areas of what is now New Jersey. New Amsterdam was granted self government and incorporated by the Dutch in 1653.



In 1664, after King Charles II decided to reclaim the territory between Virginia and New England, Peter Stuyvesant surrendered to English forces and New Amsterdam was given to the King's brother, the Duke of York, and renamed New York. The Dutch continued to struggle with the British for control of New Netherlands off and on until 1674 when the British finally obtained full control.

One of the Middle Colonies, New York originally started out as a Proprietary colony (granted by Royalty to one or more proprietors who had full governing rights) but in 1685 became a Royal colony

In 1788 New York became the eleventh state to ratify the Constitution.

## **(1633) Maryland**

In 1632 Charles I granted a Maryland Charter to Lord Baltimore (George Calvert, Baron of Baltimore). Lord Baltimore wanted very much to see the Colony become a reality and his son Cecil saw to it that the new Colony was settled. In 1633 the first group of settlers set sail for Maryland to establish a colony of freemen led by Leonard Calvert, Cecil Calvert's younger brother.

One of the Southern Colonies, Maryland was a Proprietary colony

Maryland was the seventh state to ratify the Constitution in 1788.

### **(1636) Rhode Island**

While scattered Europeans began to settle the area as early as 1620, the first permanent settlement wasn't established until 1636. In 1635 Roger Williams was driven from Salem, Massachusetts for espousing religious and political freedom. After spending the winter with the Indians he finally bought land from the Narragansett Indians and settled in what is now called Providence. The new colony became a haven for those seeking religious freedom.

In 1638, Anne Hutchinson, having been banned from Massachusetts, helped found Portsmouth, Rhode Island.

A New England Colony, Rhode Island was established as a Corporate colony and received a Royal "[Charter of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations](#)" in 1663. Among other unique guarantees, the Charter established complete religious freedom in Rhode Island, which was unusual at the time, and later formed the basis for similar provisions in the U.S. Constitution.

Although Rhode Island was one of the first colonies to embrace autonomy from the British and espouse Revolutionary ideals, it was the last of the 13 colonies to ratify the Federal Constitution and became a State in 1790.

### **(1636) Connecticut**

Dutch traders had established a permanent settlement near Hartford as early as 1633. Soon English settlers began to arrive in the area from Massachusetts. In 1636, after being driven from Massachusetts, Clergyman Thomas Hooker and his followers arrived in Hartford and declared freedom from all save Divine Authority. In 1639 the "Fundamental Orders" were enacted to govern the colony. In 1662 Connecticut finally obtained a Royal Charter under John Winthrop Jr.

One of the New England Colonies, Connecticut was also a Corporate colony

In 1788 Connecticut was the fifth state to ratify the Constitution.

### **(1638) Delaware**

In 1631, the first settlement was attempted in Delaware by Dutch traders led by Captain David Pietersen de Vries. By 1632 the party had been killed in a dispute with the local natives.

In 1638, Peter Minuet, now in the service of the Swedish, led a group of Swedish settlers to the Delaware River area under a grant from the New Sweden Company. It was these Swedish settlers that brought the log cabin design to America.

In 1655 the Dutch gained control of the land from the Swedish. In 1664 the English obtained Delaware after defeating the Dutch. The Dutch briefly recaptured Delaware in 1673 but in 1674 the English finally took control. In 1682 Delaware was awarded to William Penn but his control didn't last and Delaware became independent in 1701 and elected its own assembly in 1704.

One of the Middle Colonies, Delaware was a Proprietary colony

Delaware was the first state to ratify the Constitution and become a State in 1787.

### **(1653) North Carolina**

North Carolina's outer banks were the scene of the first British colonizing efforts in North America. Both attempts, in the late 1500's, to form a colony on Roanoke Island (see [above](#) ) did not succeed.



Virginia colonists began to settle the North Carolina region in 1653 to provide a buffer for the southern frontier. In 1691 Albermarle, the northern Carolina region, was officially recognized by the English crown. This is the first time the "North Carolina" designation was used.

One of the Southern Colonies, North Carolina started out as a Proprietary colony but obtained a Royal charter in 1729 from George II.

After agreeing to the first 12 amendments, in 1789, North Carolina became the 12th state to ratify the new Constitution.

### **(1663) South Carolina**

South Carolina was the site of the first European settlement in North America. In 1526 San Miguel de Guadalupe was established by settlers from Hispanolia who initially landed in South Carolina but ended up moving to an area of the Carolina region that would eventually become Georgia. The party returned to Hispanolia after suffering many deaths due to fever the first year.

In 1663 King Charles II created the colony of Carolina (named for King Charles II) by granting the territory, of what is now roughly North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia, to loyal supporters. This colonial charter was challenged by many Virginians who had settled in Albermarle Sound and resented their inclusion in the Carolina Charter. Charleston (originally Charles Town after the King) was founded in 1670 by a group of 200 colonists from English Barbados. The leader of the colonists was Sir John Yeamans, a powerful plantation owner on Barbados.

One of the Southern Colonies, South Carolina started out as a Proprietary colony but also became a Royal colony in 1719.

In 1788 South Carolina was the eighth state to ratify the Constitution.

### **(1682) Pennsylvania**

As early as 1647, settlement occurred on what is now Pennsylvania soil by Swedish, Dutch and English settlers in the Delaware River region. In 1681 however, Pennsylvania's colonial status was sealed when approximately the present state of Pennsylvania was granted to William Penn, a member of the Society of Friends (Quakers), to offset a debt owed to Penn's father. In 1682 the city plan for Philadelphia was laid out. In 1682 the "Frame of Government" for Pennsylvania was put into effect. In 1683 the first German settlers arrived in Pennsylvania and formed Germantown near Philadelphia.

One of the Middle Colonies, Pennsylvania was a Proprietary colony

In 1763, Charles Mason and Jeremiah Dixon, two young British astronomers commissioned to establish a borderline between Maryland and Pennsylvania, worked for more than four years to settle a century-old boundary dispute between the Calverts of Maryland and the Penns of Pennsylvania by establishing the Mason-Dixon Line.

In 1787 Pennsylvania was the second state to ratify the Constitution.

### **(1732) Georgia**

There were a few [Spanish settlements](#) along the coast, north of Florida, in the 16th and early 17th century but what is now Georgia was originally just the southern portion of the Carolina grant. Hoping to provide a second chance for adventurous members of the English under class, King George II, in 1732, granted Georgia to James Edward Oglethorpe, an English general. In addition to its lofty social goals the new Colony was also intended to provide additional protection for its northern colonial partners. Prior to Oglethorpe and his party settling the area in 1733, Fort King George was the only English occupation in the area. The Fort, which was established in 1721, was the Southern-most post in the Colonies and was situated to provide a buffer against Spanish and French intrusion from the South.

In 1738, General Oglethorpe brought a large military contingent to Georgia and the following year his troops provided a strong showing against the Spanish in King George's War ( the War of Austrian Succession in Europe). General Oglethorpe led his men into St. Augustine and although they were not able to obtain a victory there, when the Spanish sailed into Georgia seeking retaliation two years later, he and his soldiers were able to drive the Spanish back to Florida for, what turned out to be, the last time.

One of the Southern Colonies, Georgia started out as a Proprietary colony but eventually became a Royal colony in 1752.

In 1788 Georgia was the fourth state to ratify the Constitution.