

Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies began with the establishment of Jamestown in 1607; the colonies grew over time and became part of the new United States in 1789. The Southern Colonies included Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

The Southern Colonies were known for having a warm, damp climate, the soil was perfect for growing cash crops like tobacco, indigo, and rice. Large plantations thrived in the Southern Colonies, as did smaller, family-run farms. Large plantations imported African slaves for the labor force. Plantation owners tended to lead lavish lives, while their enslaved workers tended the fields. Most Southerners owned small farms, did not enjoy a high standard of living, and did their best just to earn a living. The rich planters lived along the eastern coast, while the subsistence farmers tended to settle further west along the Appalachian Mountain range. There were considerable differences between the New England, Middle and Southern regions.

Economic activities and trade were dependent of the environment in which the Colonists lived. The Southern Colonies concentrated on agriculture and developed the plantations exporting tobacco, cotton, corn, vegetables, grain, fruit and livestock. The Southern Colonies had the largest slave population who worked on the Slave Plantations. Some of the Southern plantations were massive and consisted of the main house, slave quarters, a dairy, blacksmith's shop, laundry, smokehouse and barns which made the plantations to large degree, self-sufficient. Crops were traded for items that could not be produced on the plantations including farm tools, shoes, lace, and dishes.

Notable people from the Southern Colonies include John Rolfe who brought tobacco to Virginia and turned Jamestown into a boomtown. Lord Baltimore was the founder of Maryland including giving his name to the now famous city of Baltimore. James Oglethorpe who changed Georgia from a prison colony to a royal colony. Notable events include the founding of Jamestown, the first successful English Colony. The southern colonies plantation system directly resulted in the colonies involvement in the Triangular Trade (slave trade).

The geography of the Southern Colonies featured fertile soil, hilly coastal plains, forests, long rivers and swamp areas. Warmest of the three regions, winters not difficult to survive, but the hot and humid summers gave rise to the spread of disease. The warm climate made it possible to grow crops throughout the year and was ideally suited for plantations

The Southern Colonies were not dominated by a specific religion. This gave way to religious freedom for Baptists, Anglicans and others. The exception is Maryland. Maryland was specifically set up as a Catholic refuge. Names after Queen Mary of Scots, who brought Catholicism back to England and was violently murdered by the Protestants.

There were two types of government in the Southern Colonies, Proprietary Government and Royal Government. The proprietary government was governed by one person or a group of people who reported back to the king. The king would give a land grant to a person or group of people. That person or group would essentially own the colony. They would control all of the actions of the people. They also controlled all institutions of the government. The other colonists had no control or voice in the government whatsoever. Maryland was the only southern colony that had a proprietary government.

The other southern colonies had a royal government. Royal colonies were owned by the crown and were ruled directly by the English monarchy. In the royal government, there was a governor who reported directly to the crown. The governor was often sent directly from England to govern the colony. There was a colonial legislature that was composed of a group of society's economic elite. The legislature could be appointed by the governor, but was usually elected at the county level.

