

# The Original Thirteen Colonies

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The story of the United States began with the original thirteen colonies. A colony is a region controlled by a distant country. People who came to North America from all over Europe settled in areas of land owned by Great Britain. Each colony was different from the others because each colony's inhabitants practiced their own religions, spoke their own languages, and celebrated their own customs. However, each colony was the same as the others in that they all were governed by Great Britain, their parent country.

## New England Colonies

The New England Colonies were the farthest north and were made up of Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The land in these colonies was used predominantly for farms, which produced corn, wheat, and potatoes. Farmers in the northern colonies also raised cattle for meat and dairy. Large-scale farming in the northern colonies looked similar to that of southern plantations, and used slave labor. Port towns were important to trade between the northern colonies and European countries. In these port towns fishing, lumbering, and shipbuilding were important jobs.

## Middle Colonies

The Middle Colonies were originally owned by the Dutch, and then were taken over by the British. These colonies included Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. These colonies became known as the "breadbasket colonies" because they grew wheat and used mills to crush grain into flour that was then baked into bread. Here, slaves were used as laborers on farms and in mills. Large port towns also made fishing, lumbering, shipbuilding, and ironworks popular. Urban slaves in port towns like New York City tended to the household needs of wealthy merchants. The major port city of New York became important not only to European trade, but also as the location of the arrival of the British Fleet during the Revolutionary War. Therefore it was a political and military center.

## Southern Colonies

The Southern Colonies included Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. These colonies made large profits from cash crops such as tobacco, indigo, and rice. Large plantations were large farms that resembled villages. Slaves were used for planting and harvesting the crops.

## Resources:

Colonial Williamsburg. Introduction to colonial African American life. Online article retrieved on 1/2/2012 from <http://www.history.org/almanack/people/african/aaintro.cfm>.

Dirksen Congressional Center. (2008). The original thirteen colonies. Online article retrieved on 1/2/2012 from [http://congressforkids.net/Independence\\_thirteencolonies.htm](http://congressforkids.net/Independence_thirteencolonies.htm).

Harper, D. (2003). Slavery in the North. Online article retrieved on 1/2/2012 from <http://www.slavenorth.com/slavenorth.htm>

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