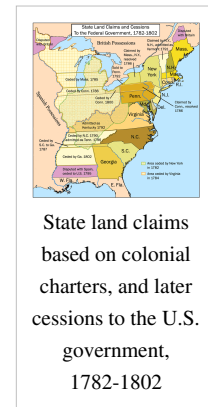
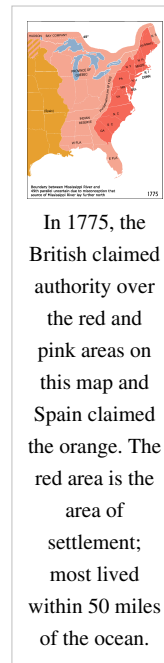
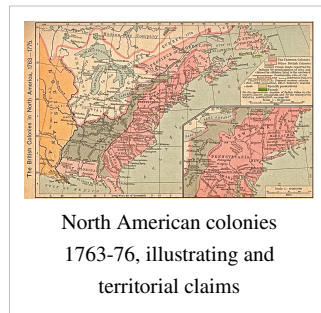


# Thirteen Colonies

The **Thirteen Colonies** were British colonies established on the Atlantic coast of North America between 1607 and 1733. They declared their independence in the American Revolution and formed the United States. The colonies were: Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts Bay, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island and Providence. Each colony developed its own system of self government. The white Americans were mostly independent farmers, who owned their own land and voted for their local and provincial government. Benjamin Franklin in 1772, after examining the wretched hovels in Scotland surrounding the opulent mansions of the land owners, said that in New England every man is a property owner, "has a Vote in public Affairs, lives in a tidy, warm House, has plenty of good Food and Fuel, with whole clothes from Head to Foot, the Manufacture perhaps of his own family."<sup>[1]</sup>

Before independence, the thirteen were part of a larger set of colonies in British America. Those in the British West Indies, Canada, and East and West Florida remained loyal to the crown throughout the war, although there was a degree of sympathy with the Patriot cause in several of them. However, their geographical isolation and the dominance of British naval power precluded any effective participation.

## Colonies



Contemporaneous documents usually list the thirteen colonies of British North America in geographical order, from the north to the south.

### New England Colonies

- Province of New Hampshire, later New Hampshire
- Province of Massachusetts Bay, later Massachusetts and Maine
- Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, later Rhode Island
- Connecticut Colony, later Connecticut

### Middle Colonies

- Province of New York, later New York and Vermont<sup>[2]</sup>
- Province of New Jersey, later New Jersey

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- Province of Pennsylvania, later Pennsylvania
- Delaware Colony (before 1776, the *Lower Counties on Delaware*), later Delaware

#### Southern Colonies

(Virginia and Maryland comprised the Chesapeake Colonies)

- Province of Maryland, later Maryland
- Colony and Dominion of Virginia, later Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia
- Province of North Carolina, later North Carolina and Tennessee
- Province of South Carolina, later South Carolina
- Province of Georgia, later Georgia, northern sections of Alabama and Mississippi

## Other divisions prior to 1730

### Dominion of New England

Created in 1685 by a decree from King James II that consolidated Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay Colony, Plymouth Colony, Rhode Island, Connecticut, Province of New York, East Jersey, and West Jersey into a single larger colony. The experiment was discontinued with the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, and the nine former colonies re-established their separate identities in 1689.

### Province of Maine

Settled in 1622 (An earlier attempt to settle the Popham Colony in Sagadahoc, Maine (near present day Phippsburg and Popham Beach State Park) in 1607 was abandoned after only one year). Massachusetts Bay colony encroached into Maine during the English Civil War, but, with the Restoration, autonomy was returned to Maine in 1664. Maine was officially merged into Massachusetts Bay Colony with the issuance of the Massachusetts Bay charter of 1691.

### Plymouth Colony

Settled in 1620 by the Pilgrims. Plymouth was absorbed by Massachusetts Bay Colony with the issuance of the Massachusetts Bay charter of 1691.

### Saybrook Colony

Founded in 1635 and merged with Connecticut Colony in 1644.

### New Haven

Settled in late 1637. New Haven was absorbed by Connecticut Colony with the issuance of the Connecticut Charter in 1662, partly as royal punishment by King Charles II for harboring the regicide judges who sentenced King Charles I to death.

### East and West Jersey

New Jersey was divided into two separate colonies in 1674. The Jerseys were reunited in 1702.

### Province of Carolina

Founded in 1663. Carolina colony was divided into two colonies, North Carolina and South Carolina in 1712. Both colonies became royal colonies in 1729.

## Population

(Note: the population figures are estimates by historians; they do not include the native tribes outside the jurisdiction of the colonies; they do include Natives living under colonial control, as well as slaves and indentured servants.)

Year	Population
1625	1,980
1641	50,000
1688	200,000
1702	270,000
1715	435,000
1749	1,000,000
1754	1,500,000
1765	2,200,000
1775	2,400,000

By 1776 about 85% of the white population was of English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh descent, with 9% of German origin and 4% Dutch. These populations continued to grow at a rapid rate throughout the 18th century primarily because of high birth rates, and relatively low death rates. Immigration was a minor factor from 1774 to 1830. Over 90% were farmers, with several small cities that were also seaports linking the colonial economy to the larger British Empire.<sup>[3]</sup> <sup>[4]</sup>

## Government

British settlers did not come to the American colonies with the intention of creating a democratic system, yet by doing without a land-owning aristocracy they created a broad electorate and a pattern of free and frequent elections that put a premium on voter participation. The colonies offered a much broader franchise than England or indeed any other country. Americans enjoyed the thrill of voting and exercised it often. White men with enough property could vote for members of the lower house of the legislature, and in Connecticut and Rhode Island they could even vote for governor.

Legitimacy for a voter meant having an "interest" in society – as the South Carolina legislature said in 1716,, "it is necessary and reasonable, that none but such persons will have an interest in the Province should be capable to elect members of the Commons House of Assembly."<sup>[5]</sup> Women, children, indentured servants and slaves were subsumed under the interest of the family head. The main legal criterion for having an "interest" was ownership of property, which was narrowly based in Britain, and nineteen out of twenty men were controlled politically by their landlords. London insisted on it for the colonies, telling governors to exclude man who were not freeholders (that is, did not own land) from the ballot. Nevertheless land was so widely owned that 50% to 80% of the white men were eligible to vote.<sup>[6]</sup> The colonial political culture emphasized deference, so that local notables were the men who ran and were chosen. But sometimes they competed with each other, and had to appeal to the common man for votes. There were no political parties, and would-be legislators formed ad-hoc coalitions of their families, friends, and neighbors. Outside Puritan New England, election day brought in all the men from the countryside to the county seat to make merry, politick, shake hands with the grandees, and meet old friends, hear the speeches and all the while toasting, eating, treating, tipping, gaming and gambling. They voted by shouting their choice to the clerk, as supporters cheered or booed. Candidate George Washington spent L39 for treats for his supporters. The candidates knew they had to "swill the planters with bumbo (rum)." Elections were carnivals where all men were equal for one day and traditional restraints relaxed.<sup>[7]</sup>

The actual rate of voting ranged from 20% to 40% of all adult white males. The rates were higher in Pennsylvania, New York, where long-standing factions, based on ethnic and religious groups, mobilize supporters at a higher rate. New York and Rhode Island developed long-lasting two-faction systems that held together for years at the colony level, but did not reach into local affairs. The factions were based on the personalities of a few leaders and arrays of family connection, and had little basis in policy or ideology. Elsewhere the political scene was in a constant whirl, and based on personality rather than long-lived factions or serious disputes on issues.<sup>[8]</sup>

The colonies were independent of each other before 1774 as efforts led by Benjamin Franklin to form a colonial union through the Albany Congress of 1765 had not made progress. The thirteen all had well established systems of self government and elections based on the Rights of Englishmen, which they were determined to protect from imperial interference. The "vast majority" of white men were eligible to vote.<sup>[9]</sup>

## Economic policy

Mercantilism was the basic policy imposed by Britain on its colonies.<sup>[10]</sup> Mercantilism meant that the government and the merchants became partners with the goal of increasing political power and private wealth, to the exclusion of other empires. The government protected its merchants--and kept others out--by trade barriers, regulations, and subsidies to domestic industries in order to maximize exports from and minimize imports to the realm. The government had to fight smuggling--which became a favorite American technique in the 18th century to circumvent the restrictions on trading with the French, Spanish or Dutch.<sup>[11]</sup> The goal of mercantilism was to run trade surpluses, so that gold and silver would pour into London. The government took its share through duties and taxes, with the remainder going to merchants in Britain. The government spent much of its revenue on a superb Royal Navy, which not only protected the British colonies but threatened the colonies of the other empires, and sometimes seized them. Thus the British Navy captured New Amsterdam (New York) in 1664. The colonies were captive markets for British industry, and the goal was to enrich the mother country.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Coming of American revolution

Beginning with the intense protests over the Stamp Act of 1765, the Americans insisted on the principle of "no taxation without representation". They argued that, as the colonies had no representation in the British Parliament, it was a violation of their rights as Englishmen for taxes to be imposed upon them. Those other British colonies that had assemblies largely agreed with those in the Thirteen Colonies, but they were thoroughly controlled by the British Empire and the Royal Navy, so protests were hopeless.<sup>[13]</sup>

Parliament rejected the colonial protests and asserted its authority by passing new taxes. Trouble escalated over the tea tax, as Americans in each colony boycotted the tea and in Boston, dumped the tea in the harbor during the Boston Tea Party in 1773. Tensions escalated in 1774 as Parliament passed the laws known as the Intolerable Acts, which, among other things, greatly restricted self-government in the colony of Massachusetts. In response the colonies formed extralegal bodies of elected representatives, generally known as Provincial Congresses, and later that year twelve colonies sent representatives to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. During the Second Continental Congress the thirteenth colony, Georgia, sent delegates. By spring 1775 all royal officials had been expelled from all thirteen colonies. The Continental Congress served as a national government through the war that raised an army to fight the British and named George Washington its commander, made treaties, declared independence, and instructed the colonies to write constitutions and become states.<sup>[14]</sup>

## Other British colonies

At the time of the war Britain had seven other colonies on the Atlantic coast of North America: Newfoundland, Rupert's Land (the area around the Hudson Bay), Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, East Florida, West Florida, and the Province of Quebec. There were other colonies in the Americas as well, largely in the British West Indies. These colonies remained loyal to the crown.<sup>[15]</sup>

Newfoundland stayed loyal to Britain without question. It was exempt from the Navigation Acts and shared none of the grievances of the continental colonies. It was tightly bound to Britain and controlled by the Royal Navy and had no assembly that could voice grievances.

Nova Scotia had a large Yankee element that had recently arrived from New England, and shared the sentiments of the Americans about demanding the rights of the British men. The royal government in Halifax reluctantly allowed the Yankees of Nova Scotia a kind of "neutrality." In any case, the island-like geography and the presence of the major British naval base at Halifax made the thought of armed resistance impossible.<sup>[16]</sup>

Quebec was inhabited by French Catholic settlers who came under British control in the previous decade. The Quebec Act of 1774 gave them formal cultural autonomy within the empire, and many priests feared the intense Protestantism in New England. The American grievances over taxation had little relevance, and there was no assembly nor elections of any kind that could have mobilized any grievances. Even so the Americans offered membership in the new nation and sent a military expedition that failed to capture Canada in 1775. Most Canadians remained neutral but some joined the American cause.<sup>[17]</sup>

In the West Indies the elected assemblies of Jamaica, Grenada, and Barbados formally declared their sympathies for the American cause. The possibilities for overt action were sharply limited by the overwhelming power of Royal Navy in the islands. During the war there was some opportunistic trading with American ships.

In Bermuda and the Bahamas local leaders were angry at the food shortages caused by British blockade of American ports. There was increasing sympathy for the American cause, including smuggling, and both colonies were considered "passive allies" of the United States throughout the war. When an American naval squadron arrived in the Bahamas to seize gunpowder, the colony gave no resistance at all.<sup>[18]</sup>

East Florida and West Florida were new royal territories, transferred to Britain during the French and Indian War. The few British colonists there needed protection from attacks by Indians and Spanish privateers. After 1775, East Florida became a major base for the British war effort in the South, especially in the invasions of Georgia and South Carolina.<sup>[19]</sup> However, Spain seized Pensacola in West Florida in 1781, and won both colonies in the Treaty of Paris that ended the war in 1783. Spain ultimately transferred both Florida colonies to the United States in 1819.<sup>[20]</sup>

## Notes

[1] Quoted in Claude H. Van Tine, *The Causes of the War of Independence* (1922) p 318

[2] The present State of Vermont was disputed between the colonies of New York and New Hampshire. From 1777 to 1791, it existed as the *de facto* independent Vermont Republic.

[3] Greene (1905) is basic

[4] Daniel Scott Smith, "The Demographic History of Colonial New England," *Journal of Economic History* Vol. 32, No. 1, (Mar., 1972), pp. 165-183 is advanced (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2117183>)

[5] Thomas Cooper and David James McCord, eds. *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina: Acts, 1685-1716* (1837) p 688

[6] Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote* (2000) pp 5-8

[7] Daniel Vickers, *A Companion to Colonial America* (2006) p. 300

[8] Robert J. Dinkin, *Voting in Provincial America: A Study of Elections in the Thirteen Colonies, 1689-1776* (1977)

[9] Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds. "A Companion to the American Revolution (2004) quote p. 665

[10] Max Savelle, *Seeds of Liberty: The Genesis of the American Mind* (2005) pp. 204-211 ([http://books.google.com/books?id=hIgl\\_HNzQsC&pg=PA204&dq=mercantilism+\"colonial+OR+america\"+OR+\"American+OR+colonies\"&hl=en&ei=5iDMTdXbKONiiAL7oeGABQ&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CFMQ6AEwBQ#v=onepage&q=mercantilism\"colonial OR america\" OR \"American OR colonies\"&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=hIgl_HNzQsC&pg=PA204&dq=mercantilism+\))

- [11] George Otto Trevelyan, *The American revolution: Volume 1* (1899) p. 128 online ([http://books.google.com/books?id=sfwpAAAAyAAJ&pg=PA128&dq=smuggling+american+revolution&hl=en&ei=WyDNTfaoFIXEsAOI\\_8nKCw&sa=X&oi=book\\_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CEoQ6AEwBTgK](http://books.google.com/books?id=sfwpAAAAyAAJ&pg=PA128&dq=smuggling+american+revolution&hl=en&ei=WyDNTfaoFIXEsAOI_8nKCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CEoQ6AEwBTgK))
- [12] William R. Nester, *The Great Frontier War: Britain, France, and the Imperial Struggle for North America, 1607-1755* (Praeger, 2000) p. 54.
- [13] Donald William Meinig, *The Shaping of America: Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (1986) p. 315; Greene and Pole, *Companion* ch. 63
- [14] Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford History of the United States) (2007)
- [15] Lawrence Gipson, *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* (15 volumes, 1936–1970)
- [16] Meinig pp. 313-14; Greene and Pole (2004) ch. 61
- [17] Meinig pp 314-15; Greene and Pole (2004) ch 61
- [18] Meinig pp 315-16; Greene and Pole (2004) ch 63
- [19] Meinig p 316
- [20] P. J. Marshall, ed. *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (2001)

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