

Life in the Thirteen British Colonies: Climate, Commerce, and Culture

NEW ENGLAND COLONIES

Massachusetts (1628)

Climate/Geography

- Long, cold winters, moderate summers, plentiful forests, and rocky soil

Commerce/Production

- Mostly family subsistence farms
- Fishing, whaling, logging, shipbuilding, and rum-distilling (“Triangular Trade” with Africa and the West Indies)
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Puritan religious beliefs with little toleration of religious dissent
- Town meetings: an example of direct democracy

New Hampshire (1629)

Climate/Geography

- Long, very cold winters, moderate summers, rocky soil, steep hills and mountains, and dense forests

Commerce/Production

- Mostly family subsistence farms
- Fishing, whaling, logging, shipbuilding, and rum-distilling (“Triangular Trade” with Africa and the West Indies)
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Puritan religious beliefs with little toleration of religious dissent
- Town meetings: an example of direct democracy

Rhode Island (1636)

Climate/Geography

- Long, cold winters, moderate summers, plentiful forests, and rocky soil

Commerce/Production

- Mostly family subsistence farms
- Fishing, whaling, logging, shipbuilding, and rum-distilling (“Triangular Trade” with Africa and the West Indies)
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Charter colony: major government officials selected by the people
- Founded by Roger Williams with religious freedom for all residents
- Town meetings: an example of direct democracy

Connecticut (1636)

Climate/Geography

- Long, cold winters, moderate summers, plentiful forests, and rocky soil

Commerce/Production

- Mostly family subsistence farms
- Fishing, whaling, logging, shipbuilding, and rum-distilling (“Triangular Trade” with Africa and the West Indies)
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Charter colony: major government officials selected by the people
- Founded by Thomas Hooker with religious freedom for all residents
- The “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut” (1639): often considered the first written constitution in America