

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

MIDDLE COLONIES

New York (1626)

Climate/Geography

- Moderate, temperate climate with sufficient rainfall and fertile soil
- Many lakes, rivers, and good harbors

Commerce/Production

- “Breadbasket” of colonial America: surplus corn and wheat grown on large farms sent to Europe and the West Indies
- Small manufacturing businesses in textiles and iron, raising livestock, fur trading with Indian tribes
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Religion: primarily the Anglican Church once England took over, with some Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian, and smaller congregations of other religions, including Methodists, Baptists, and Jews
- Class distinctions developed between government officials, large landowners, and prosperous merchants vs. small farmers, craftsmen, laborers, and shopkeepers

New Jersey (1664)

Climate/Geography

- Moderate, temperate climate with sufficient rainfall and fertile soil
- Many lakes, rivers, and good harbors

Commerce/Production

- “Breadbasket” of colonial America: surplus corn and wheat grown on large farms exported to Europe and the West Indies
- Small manufacturing businesses in textiles and iron, raising livestock, fur trading with Indian tribes
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Religious freedom for all residents
- Simple living in self-built wooden homes and homemade furnishings, tools, and utensil

Delaware (1664)

Climate/Geography

- Moderate, temperate climate with sufficient rainfall and fertile soil
- Many lakes, rivers, plains, and good harbors

Commerce/Production

- “Breadbasket” of colonial America: surplus corn and wheat grown on large farms exported to Europe and the West Indies
- Small manufacturing businesses, raising livestock, and fur trading with Indian tribes
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Proprietary colony: major government officials selected by the proprietor
- Settlers of all religious faiths welcomed, no “established” church
- Many diverse European immigrants (Dutch, Swedes, Finns, French, Scots, and British) settled in the colony as farmers, craftsmen, laborers, merchants, and shopkeepers.

Pennsylvania (1682)

Climate/Geography

- Moderate, temperate climate with sufficient rainfall and fertile soil
- Many lakes (Lake Erie), rivers, and good harbors

Commerce/Production

- “Breadbasket” of colonial America: surplus corn and wheat grown on large farms exported to Europe and the West Indies
- Small manufacturing businesses, raising livestock, and fur-trading with Indian tribes.
- Family labor supplemented by paid labor, indentured servants, and some African and Indian slaves

Culture

- Proprietary colony: major government officials selected by the proprietor
- Founding proprietor William Penn sought religious haven for Quakers
- Religious freedom for all residents