

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

SOUTHERN COLONIES

Virginia (1607)

Climate/Geography

- Warm climate with sufficient rainfall, long growing season, and fertile soil
- The Appalachian Mountains: a natural barrier between the English and French colonies in North America

Commerce/Production

- Rivers, lakes, and good harbors for commerce and transportation
- Tobacco as a cash crop and a farming economy based on large plantations
- Labor: indentured servants from Europe and forced migration and enslavement of Africans

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Anglican Church became the “established” church of the colony, supported by taxes
- Class distinctions developed between government officials, large landowners, and prosperous merchants vs. small farmers, craftsmen, laborers, and shopkeepers.

Maryland (1632)

Climate/Geography

- Warm climate with sufficient rainfall and fertile soil
- Longer growing seasons and extensive river systems

Commerce/Production

- Shipbuilding, iron works, and local textile manufacturing
- Good harbors for fishing and commerce
- Tobacco as a cash crop and a farming economy based on large plantations
- Labor: indentured servants from Europe and forced migration and enslavement of Africans

Culture

- Proprietary colony: major government officials selected by the Proprietor
- Founding proprietor: Lord Baltimore (George Calvert) sought religious haven for Catholics
- Religious freedom for all residents

North Carolina (1653)

Climate/Geography

- Warm climate with a long growing season
- Coastal plains, mountain ranges, and plateaus

Commerce/Production

- Surplus food crops sold to other colonies
- Cash crops of tobacco, cotton, indigo, rice, sugar, etc., sent to Europe
- Good harbors for fishing and commerce
- Labor: indentured servants from Europe and forced migration and enslavement of Africans

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Settlers of all religious faiths were welcomed; no “established” church.
- Class distinctions developed between government officials, large landowners, and prosperous merchants vs. small farmers, craftsmen, laborers, and shopkeepers
- High incidence of mosquito-related diseases and mortality rates

South Carolina (1663)

Climate/Geography

- Warm climate and a long growing season

Commerce/Production

- Good harbors for fishing and commerce
- Cash crops included tobacco, cotton, indigo, rice, and sugar; a farming economy based on large plantations
- Labor: primarily forced migration and enslavement of Africans, some indentured servants from Europe

Culture

- Royal colony: major government officials selected by the king
- Settlers of all religious faiths welcomed; no “established” church
- Class distinctions between government officials, large landowners, and prosperous merchants vs. small farmers, craftsmen, laborers, and shopkeepers

Georgia (1732)

Climate/Geography

- Warm climate provided a long growing season
- Hilly coastal plains, plentiful forests

Commerce/Production

- Good harbors for fishing and commerce

- Cash crops included tobacco, cotton, indigo, rice, and sugar; a farming economy based on large plantations
- Labor: indentured servants from Europe and forced migration and enslavement of Africans

Culture

- Founded to create a buffer of protection between South Carolina and the Spaniards in Florida and the French in Louisiana; refuge for persecuted English Protestants and impoverished and indebted people
- Royal charter: governed by twenty trustees, who enacted all laws, taxes, and land grants (a five hundred acre limit)
- “Melting pot” of Protestant sects, including Anglicans, Lutherans, Puritans, Quakers, etc.; no “established” church in the colony