

Colonial Beginnings



John Winthrop, Puritan leader of Massachusetts Bay Colony

I. European Models for Colonizing America

A. Spain--colonization with conversion

1. Earliest colonies in America (St. Augustine 1565, Santa Fe 1610), though most outposts were destroyed by Indian attacks
2. Spain turned to Franciscan missionaries to control Indians, placing land grants in the hands of *encomenderos*. Spanish rule was cruel, used slavery, and was limited, except for New Mexico. California was virtually ignored until the late 1700s.
3. By 1560, the main goal of Spanish colonial policy was keeping other Europeans from establishing colonies.

B. France--fur-trading empire

1. Indian wars developed as tribes fought for the French fur trade.
2. French missionaries did not enslave Indians and attempted to limit trading of alcohol
3. Though few in number, French settlers brought diseases that wiped out up to 90% of the Indians in the Great Lakes region.

C. Netherlands--commerce and farming

1. Colonization was slow and small-scale, with only one proprietor (Rensselaer) able to attract 50 tenants
2. Rejecting representative rule, the Dutch lost the settlement of New Amsterdam (New York) to the British in 1664

D. The English model--tobacco and settlers

1. Causes for English Colonizing in North America

- a. Fall of Spanish Armada in 1588 opened North Atlantic to English expansion
- b. England infused with a spirit of self-confidence and enthusiasm for adventure.
- c. England could plant, supply, and protect colonies easily.

2. Changes in English economy.

- a. Rise of merchant class to provide business leadership and wealth for colonial investment.
- b. Joint-stock company allowed for pooling of capital with limited risk.
- c. Surplus population in cities as farmers were pushed off lands converted to sheep herding

3. Protestant Reformation

- a. Priesthood of all believers inspired religious dissidents
- b. Anti-"Popish" believers (Puritans) felt that the Church of England was not Protestant enough in its beliefs and practices.
- c. Persecution of Puritans, Catholics, and Quakers led to conflict with religious and political authorities

d. America was seen as a desirable haven for these groups.

II. Jamestown and Virginia

A. Virginia Company received charter (guaranteeing settlers the same rights as Englishmen at home) from King James I for settlement in America (1607). Goals:

1. Gold and wealth
2. Convert Indians to Christianity
3. Find a passage to the Indies

B. Early group suffered from laziness, starvation, and malaria. Saved by leadership of John Smith and enterprise of tobacco planter John Rolfe, who perfected methods of raising and curing tobacco

1. Tobacco brought capital and workers to Virginia. Exports rose to 10 million pounds by 1660. The Virginia Company provided land, established a headright system and courts, and allowed self-government by planters.

2. Problems with tobacco farming
 - a) Chained prosperity of Virginia to one crop
 - b) Exhausted the soil
 - c) Promoted large-acreage plantations which needed large amounts of cheap labor. First indentured servants with few rights or chances to advance and then slaves with fewer rights and no chance to advance.

C. Bacon's Rebellion

1. Attacks on Indians by poor whites led to the killing of 300 whites. A defensive military strategy failed as Nathaniel Bacon attacked Indians and then seized control of the colony.

2. Bacon died in 1676, but his followers pushed for tax cuts, voting rights for landless whites, and an end to corruption.

3. The planter class sought to limit the number of white servants who might rebel again, thus opening the way for slavery's expansion.

D. Contributions of early Virginia

1. Provided model for further economic investment in America
2. First representative self-government (House of Burgesses--1619)
3. Demand for slaves (1st slaves sold by Dutch to settlers in 1619)

III. New England Colonies--settled most frequently by families

A. Separatists (Pilgrims) arrived at Plymouth in 1620 on Mayflower after initial settlement in Holland.

1. Mayflower Compact--first document of self-government in America.
2. After difficult first winter (44 out of 102 survived), Pilgrims survived under the leadership of Governor William Bradford.

B. Puritans established Massachusetts Bay in 1630 (John Winthrop and 900 settlers) for economic and religious reasons.

1. Large numbers of middle class settlers, many of whom were educated.
2. Successful as fur traders, fishermen, and shipbuilders.
3. Great Puritan Migration of 1629-1640 brought many new settlers.
4. Ruled as 'Bible Commonwealth' with franchise restricted to male members of Puritan (later Congregational) church--probably 1/5 of adult white male population.

C. Puritans and Pequots--series of disastrous contacts

1. Smallpox epidemic of 1633 killed over 10,000 Pequots
2. 500 Pequots killed by Puritans in 1636
3. Disease, military force, and religion (praying towns) essentially pacified Indians of New England by 1670.

D. Metacom's Rebellion. Wampanoag leader organized neighboring tribes to attack settlements in 1675, resulting in 1000 white and 4500 Indian deaths.