

Information on the Colony of Massachusetts

Directions: Use this information as well as your textbook to create a brochure to entice people to come to your colony. The Chamber of Commerce Representative should read this handout aloud. Then, as a group, create a brochure that includes all of this information—as well as visuals, graphics, and illustrations.

Founder

A group of Separatist Protestants called the Pilgrims, looking to preserve their religious freedom, and led by William Bradford, sailed to Plymouth Bay in 1620 aboard a ship called the *Mayflower*. In 1630, they were followed by another group of Protestants, the Puritans, under the leadership of John Winthrop, who founded the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the area around Boston.

Reasons for Being Founded

These Pilgrims and Puritans came to North America to be able to practice their religion in their own way, and to create a place for others who believed as they did to live and worship with them.

People in the Colony

Native Americans greeted the first settlers and helped them survive the first winter, which was colder and harsher than the English settlers had expected. Many tribes lived throughout the New England area.

Other Puritans, who shared the beliefs of the first settlers, also came to live in the Massachusetts Colony.

Climate and Geography

Settlers found the land to be fertile and covered with rich pasture for cattle and forests for timber. The coast was sandy with cliffs and provided good ports.

Winters were bitterly cold, and many of the first settlers did not survive. Summers were warm and humid.

Economy

Colonists raised food (corn and other vegetables) for their families and for local trade, kept cattle on the pasture land, trapped fur, and forested timber for lumber. Some colonists were shopkeepers and tradesmen in the small towns, while others started a shipping industry, making use of the good natural ports along the coast.

Religion

Puritan settlers came to Massachusetts to have “purity of conscience and liberty of worship.” The laws of their colony were based on their religious beliefs. Colonists lived their entire lives around religious worship. They believed they were setting up a kingdom for their god here on earth, and only true believers were allowed to live there.

Politics and Government

Massachusetts was a theocracy. That is, it was ruled by ministers who believed they received their power from God. The only voters were white men who were in good standing with the church. They voted to elect their ministers, and these religious leaders made laws based on the church’s dogma, or religious and moral beliefs. In later years, when Puritan control was relaxed, colonists voted for colonial representatives at annual town meetings.

Information on the Colony of Rhode Island

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Founder

Though first seen and explored by Italian and Dutch explorers, Rhode Island was finally established as a colony in 1636 by Roger Williams, a preacher from the colony of Massachusetts.

Reasons for Being Founded

Roger Williams had come into conflict with the leaders of Massachusetts, who were Puritans. He preached that all people should be able to worship their god in any way they wanted. The government of Massachusetts put him on trial several times for his “dangerous opinions.” They allowed him to remain in Massachusetts as long as he kept his mouth shut. But Williams did not, so they ordered him to be put on a ship and returned to England.

Instead, Williams and his family left the Massachusetts colony and moved to a place near a Native American village on Narragansett Bay, a place he called “Providence,” meaning “direction of God.” He was soon followed by others who wanted to escape religious persecution and to find what Williams called a “haven for justice.”

People in the Colony

Rhode Island was home to many Native Americans when Roger Williams arrived and, at first, the white European colonists got along with the Native Americans.

The Williams family was followed by others looking for a place where they could worship as they chose, many from the nearby Massachusetts colony.

A few aristocratic families who settled in Rhode Island owned large farms that were like southern plantations, and these people owned African slaves to do the work on the farms.

Climate and Geography

Early explorers noticed the area’s red clay soil, and some historians think the name of the colony came from the Dutch name for the area, “Roodt Eyelandt,” which means “Red Island.” Most early colonists made their living by cattle and dairy farming, since this red clay soil and hilly, forested land was usually too poor for large-scale agriculture.

Large quiet bays made Rhode Island an ideal shipping port. Later settlers turned to the sea to earn a living, as shipbuilders, sailors, traders, and fishermen.

The winters were colder and harsher than the English were used to, and the summers were more humid.

Economy

Landowners of large farms were cattle and dairy farmers. Most other colonists lived on farms that produced just enough for their families with a little left over to trade. Common crops were corn, beans, squash, and tobacco.

Any business related to shipping was big business for Rhode Island. Shipbuilders constructed large ships built to cross the Atlantic with goods needed by England (such as rum, sugar, wool, and beef) and return with manufactured goods needed by the colonists. The colony was also a haven for pirates and privateers. Though there were few slave owners in Rhode Island, the colony was one of the world's slave trading centers, earning slave traders large fortunes.

Religion

Rhode Island was founded as a place for religious freedom and was populated by Quakers, Baptists, Anglicans, Puritans, and Congregationalists.

Politics and Government

Rhode Island was ruled by a Governor, a Deputy Governor, ten assistants to the Governor, and a General Assembly that was elected by colonists in each of the towns. This Assembly had the power to make laws, create a local militia to defend the colonists in wars with Native Americans, and monitor trade.

Connecticut

Connecticut was originally settled by Dutch fur traders in 1614. They sailed up the Connecticut River and built a fort near present-day Hartford.

The first English settlers arrived in Connecticut in 1633 under the leadership of Reverend Thomas Hooker. They were Puritans from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. After their arrival, several colonies were established including the Colony of Connecticut, Old Saybrooke, Windsor, Hartford, and New Haven. Hartford quickly became an important center of government and trade.

Much of land settled by the colonists was purchased from the Mohegan Indians. The Pequot tribe, however, wanted the land. Soon, violence erupted between settlers and the Pequot Indians in 1637. In what came to be known as the Pequot War, The Pequots were systematically massacred by not only the settlers, but by Mohegan and Naragansett Indians that had previously warred against them. Pequot lands were subsequently divided among the settlers and other tribes. After the Pequot War, Thomas Hooker led in the drafting of the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut in 1639. The document was a plan for government and is sometimes called America's first Constitution. John Haynes was then chosen as Connecticut's first governor. Finally, in 1662, Connecticut was issued a royal charter, which gave the colony a legal basis and approval from the King.

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New Hampshire

New Hampshire was founded in 1622 when John Mason and Ferdinando Gorges were given a land grant by the Council for New England. Only three years after the Pilgrim's landed at Plymouth, the first settlers arrived near present-day Portsmouth in 1623. They were fishermen. Before long, the settlers built a fort and fish-processing buildings. They named the area Pannaway Plantation. Eventually, some of the settlers moved from Pannaway Plantation and in 1629, founded the settlement of Strawberry Banke. Strawberry Bank would eventually become Portsmouth.

In 1641, the Massachusetts colony claimed the territory that was New Hampshire. New Hampshire became known as the "Upper Province" of Massachusetts. It remained the Upper Province until 1679 when it became a "Royal Province". Once again, it was reunited with Massachusetts in 1698. Finally, in 1741, New Hampshire gained its independence and elected its own governor – Benning Wentworth, who governed the colony until 1766.

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