

The Thirteen Colonies

By 1763, Britain had defeated France in the Seven Years' War. You have read about how New France became a British colony at that time. The Thirteen Colonies to the south of New France, along the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, had been British colonies. Settlers had been sent to the Thirteen Colonies to produce raw materials that would add to the wealth of Great Britain. Others went to gain religious or political freedom.

As in New France, settlers had begun to come to the Thirteen Colonies in the early 1600s. But by 1775, the population of New France was only about 70 000. The Thirteen Colonies had a European population of about 2.5 million people at this time.

Each of the Thirteen Colonies was different, but they can be divided into three groups based on their location.

Location

New England

Most of the New England settlers came from England and Scotland. These colonies were first settled by religious groups whose beliefs were not accepted in England. The economy was based on wheat farming and trade with the islands in the Caribbean Sea to the south. The seaport towns, such as Boston, with a population of 15 000, were prospering. Many people in the seaport towns made their living from the sea, or as craftspeople and merchants.

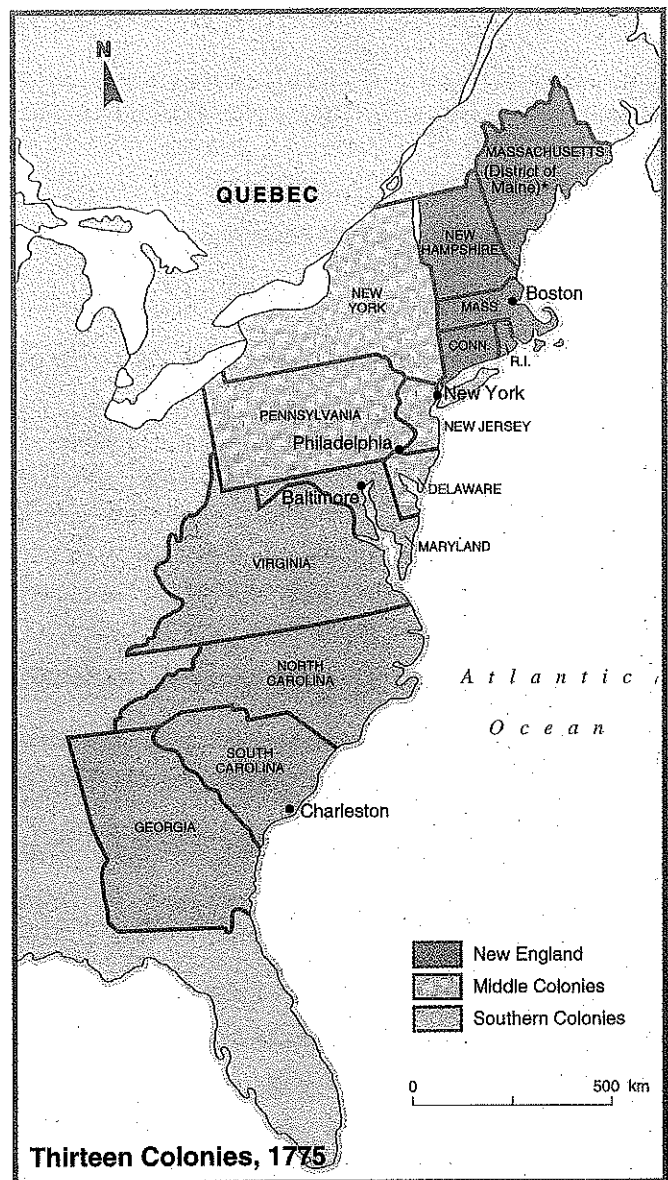
The Middle Colonies

The middle colonies had many different religions and nationalities compared to the other colonies. They were settled by Dutch, Swedes, English, Germans, Scots, and Irish, as well as others. These colonies were known as the "breadbasket" of the New World because most people were farmers. Ships loaded with crops from the Middle Colonies left from the harbours of New York and Philadelphia. These crops were sold in Britain and the West Indies.

The Southern Colonies

Many of the southern colonists were from England. Others were Scots, French, and Germans. Many British workers were needed for the huge tobacco, sugar, and rice farms, which were called plantations. These plantations were owned by a small, powerful group of people. Since few settlers were willing to work for wages on the plantations when they could have small farms of their own, the plantation owners used slaves from Africa as workers. These slaves were bought from slave traders. They were not paid wages. They were given food, clothing, and shelter.

The only large cities in the southern colonies were Charleston, with a population of 10 000, and Baltimore, with 5000.



*Note; Maine became a state in 1820. Prior to that, it was under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts and referred to as "District of Maine."