

24 What's a Colony?

Most of the colonies had no cash. They weren't supposed to mint it themselves, and England wouldn't export coins and bills. So the only way money reached the colonies was when people actually bought and sold things with it. Some colonies got so desperate for metal and paper money that they did make it themselves—or they used goods, such as tobacco, corn, and cows, instead.

Neither the landlords (Europeans) nor the renters (colonists) ever considered the Indians, who thought the land was theirs.



The Indian on the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Colony is saying “Come over and help us”—which the Indians must have found hard to believe.

The east coast of North America was an English colony from 1607, when Jamestown began, until the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776. Those were colonial times.

It was a long time. 1776 minus 1607 is...you can do the arithmetic yourself. When it comes to families, it was about seven generations. That means from son to father to grandfather to great-grandfather to great-great-

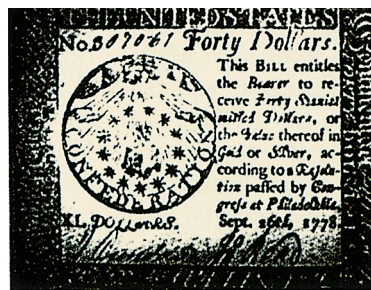
You may already know that England had 13 American colonies. I'll list them in just a minute.

First, do you remember what a colony is?

A colony is a place that belongs to another country. Think about a landlord and a renter. England, France, Spain, Holland, Sweden, and Portugal were all landlords in parts of America. They thought they owned the place. Then their colonists, the renters, said, “We're tired of belonging to someone else. We intend to own our own land.” When that happened there were revolutions, and the landlords were forced to pack up and go home.



Massachusetts minted Pine Tree shillings (above). The \$40 bill was backed by Spanish silver.





An artist who lived in the 19th century made this somewhat prettified portrait of an early colonial kitchen. A real 17th-century kitchen was probably barer and dirtier than this, with less furniture and fewer utensils and pots.

grandfather to great-great-great-grandfather to—whew—great-four-times-grandfather. A lot of things can happen in seven generations.

So when you read about colonial times, don't be surprised if you read different descriptions.

When the first colonists arrived, there were no friends to greet them. No houses were ready for them. They had to start from scratch—and I do mean scratch, as in scratching. The early colonists often had to live in huts of branches and dirt, or Indian wigwams, or even caves, and none of those places was bug-proof. And, of course, they had to scratch a living out of the ground.

Later colonists lived in small wooden houses with one or two rooms. Eventually, some lived in fine houses. A few lived in mansions, with beautiful furniture and paintings and dishes and silver. But no one had a bathroom like you have, or electric lights, or a furnace, or running water, or kitchen appliances. And very few people lived in mansions anyway.

You'll be reading about all 13 of the English colonies, because

In 1633, the Dutch brought a schoolmaster to the city of New Amsterdam to teach their children. He was Adam Roelantsen (ROY-lant-sun), and he founded the first school in the North American colonies. Today that school is the Collegiate School in New York City. Two years later, in 1635, Boston Latin School was opened. It was the first public school in the colonies. It, too, still exists.



they turned into the United States. To get started, we need some organization. We're going to divide the colonies into three groups: north, south, and middle.

Look at the map and you'll see the New England colonies, the Middle Atlantic colonies, and the Southern colonies.

You know a whole lot about New England, so here's a test. Name the New England colonies. (Without checking on the page opposite.)

Did you get them all?

Did you goof and say Maine? Remember, Maine was not a separate colony; it was part of Massachusetts. We haven't said anything about Vermont. Today Vermont is a New England state, and a beautiful one, but it was not a separate colony.

(Remember, don't confuse states with colonies. The 13 colonies will turn into states when the Constitution is written and our nation—the United States—is formed.)

You already know about one Southern colony, Virginia. You will learn about Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. (Some people call Maryland a middle colony, but I don't.)

Coming next in this book are the Middle Colonies: New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania.

First up is New York, where the Dutch are in control. It's hard for us to realize now that tiny Holland was once a great power. The Dutch had colonies all over the world. A business firm, the Dutch West India Company, owned most of the colonies, just as the Virginia and Plymouth companies owned English colonies.

Jonas Michaelius (mick-AY-lee-uss)

Sheep were very important before the colonies grew much cotton. Sheep grow heavy coats in winter, so their wool is sheared in spring.

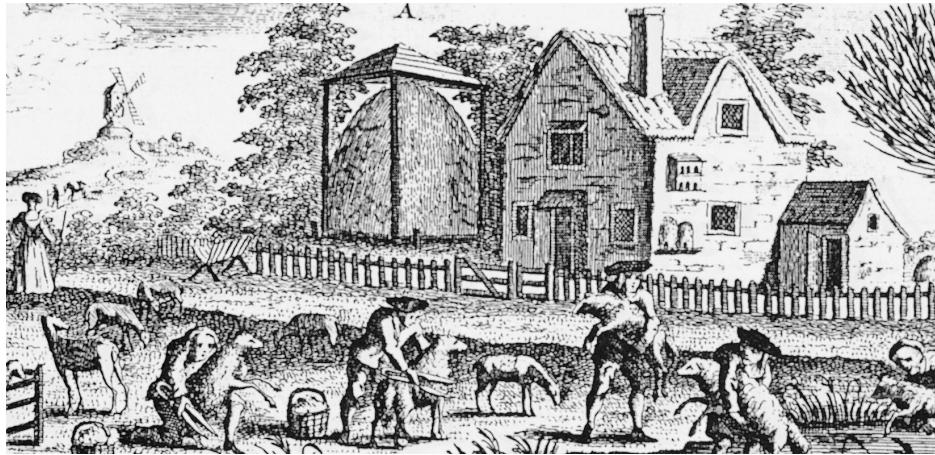
came to New York in 1628. It was called New Netherland then, and the Dutch West India Company was in charge. That company had promised Michaelius a home in the New World. Here is part of a letter Michaelius wrote soon after he arrived:

The promise which the Lords Masters of the Company had made me to make myself a home...is wholly of no avail. For their honors well know that there are no horses, cows, or laborers to be obtained here for money....The country yields many good things for the support of life, but they are all to be gathered in an uncultivated and wild state.

The Dutch West India Company made promises that couldn't be kept. The Virginia Company did the same thing at Jamestown. (Those early Virginia settlers really expected to find gold on the ground.)

The Puritans always told the truth about their colony. So did a man named William Penn who owned a colony. (Yes, some individuals did own colonies.) We'll get to William Penn and his colony when we finish with New Netherland.

That small Dutch colony was just a trading post. The Dutch thought India—with its silks and spices—was much more important than America. But, just in case America did turn out to be valuable, they decided to do some fur trading on this continent.



The New England colonies are: Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut.

Henry Hudson: New York's Explorer

Henry Hudson knew he had found something special on a September day in 1609 when he sailed his small Dutch ship, the *Half Moon*, into the river that would bear his name. He was looking for the Northwest Passage, and the river seemed likely. It was deep and full of salmon, mullet, and other fish.

The *Half Moon* sailed jauntily, a carved red lion with a golden mane jutting out from its forward tip. The lion was splendid, and so was the whole ship. The bow (the front part of the boat) was bright green, with carved sailors' heads in shades of red and yellow. The decks—the fore-castle and the poop—were painted pale blue with white clouds. The stern (the rear of the ship)

was royal blue, with stars and a picture of the Man in the Moon. That wasn't all: there were glowing lanterns and flags—the Dutch flag, the flags of all seven Dutch provinces, the flag of the Dutch East India Company, and more.

Now, what would you have thought if you were a Native American standing on the shore of Manhattan Island, and this great colorful seabird appeared with men standing on its back? Remember, this was 1609, and the *Half Moon* was probably the first European ship you'd ever seen. At first the Indians thought it had come from God, and that the men aboard were his messengers. It wasn't long, however, before they realized they were just men.