



The Thirteen Colonies

For Grades 3-5

This Pack contains:

7 ARTICLES
1 PRIMARY SOURCE
4 IMAGES

ARTICLE

13 colonies

The 13 colonies were a group of settlements that became the original states of the United States of America. Nearly all the colonies were founded by the English. All were located along the East Coast of North America. In 1776 the 13 colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. The following interactive lists the colonies and explains when they were founded:

Establishment of the Colonies



An old drawing shows the artist's idea of what the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock looked like.

Library of Congress, Washington D.C.



A print from the 1890s depicts a group of Pilgrims going to church.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (cph 3a06614)

In 1607, English settlers founded Jamestown in what is now Virginia—the first permanent English settlement in North America. Virginia became a royal colony in 1624. The rest of the colonies were founded by different groups over the next hundred years. They were not all English colonies at first. They went through many changes.



In 1664, England took over New Amsterdam (now part of New York City) from the Netherlands without firing a shot.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (LC-DIG-pga-01466)



The painting *The Birth of Pennsylvania 1680* depicts William Penn meeting with King Charles II about the future colony of Pennsylvania.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (cph 3g07157)

Here is a timeline of how the 13 colonies were settled: 1607: Jamestown is founded. 1620: A group of people from England known as the Pilgrims arrive in what is now Plymouth, **Massachusetts**. They were part of a larger group called Puritans. The Puritans wanted to practice their own form of religion. They were not allowed to do that in England. 1623: **New Hampshire** is settled by English colonists. It did not have that name until 1629. Starting in 1641, it was ruled by Massachusetts. 1624: The Dutch (people from the Netherlands) settle New Netherland, which would later become **New York**. 1624: **Virginia** becomes a royal colony. 1630: Another group of Puritans settles the **Massachusetts Bay Colony**. 1630s: Colonists from Massachusetts settle in what is now **Connecticut**. 1634: Roman Catholics led by the Calvert family establish **Maryland**. 1636: A group led by the minister Roger Williams settles **Rhode Island**. The group came from Massachusetts because they disagreed with the religious rules there. 1638: Swedish (people from Sweden) settle what is now **Delaware**. It was part of New Sweden. 1650s: The Dutch take over the Swedish colonies. 1660: The Dutch settle **New Jersey**. 1663: The English settle the Carolinas. 1664: The English take over all Dutch lands, and they rename New Netherland as **New York**. 1679: **New Hampshire** becomes a separate colony. 1681: William Penn, an English Quaker leader, sets up the colony of **Pennsylvania**. 1691: Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay are combined. 1729: The Carolina territory is split into **North and South Carolina**. 1733: **Georgia** is settled.

The Colonies and Indigenous People

The colonies were established on land that was home to thousands of Indigenous people. At first some of the colonists befriended the Native people. But soon the newcomers began to take over more and more land. They also brought diseases that the Indigenous people were not used to. As a result, thousands of Indigenous people died or were forced to move to new areas.

By 1763 Great Britain ruled all of the 13 colonies. They also ruled a large area known as the Province of Quebec. That area developed separately from the 13 colonies. Because of growing conflicts over the land, the British drew a line called the Proclamation Line. The land to the west of that line was supposed to be set aside for the Native people. The colonists were not allowed to settle there. However, the people in the 13 colonies were not happy with that. They continued to move west and to take the land away from the Native people.

The Colonies and Britain

For most of the time that the 13 colonies were under British rule, the monarchy allowed them a great deal of freedom. Most of the colonies set up forms of self-government. The colonists also developed their own society and economy.

Relations between Britain and the colonies grew worse after the French and Indian War (1754–63). The British wanted the colonists to pay taxes to help pay for the war. The colonists did not want to pay taxes. They did not think it was fair, because they did not have a voice in how they were ruled. There was no one to speak for them in the British Parliament. The Proclamation Line was another point of disagreement. Those disagreements led to the American Revolution. To learn more about the colonies, see [exploration and settlement of the Americas and United States history](#).

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ARTICLE

George Calvert

George Calvert was an English politician. He was responsible for the founding of the colony of Maryland. He wanted to establish a colony where all Christians, including Roman Catholics, could worship.



George Calvert became Lord Baltimore in 1625.

British Autography, by John Thane; 1819

Early Life

George Calvert was born in about 1578 in Kipling, Yorkshire, England. His family was Roman Catholic. After the Church of England split from the Roman Catholic Church in the 1500s, the Calverts and other Catholics were often treated unfairly. When Calvert attended Trinity College, Oxford, he had to promise that he would follow the Church of England and not the Roman Catholic Church. He graduated in 1597. He then studied law in London for three years.

Government Service

Calvert served in the English Parliament from 1609 to 1611. He was knighted by King James I in 1617 and became secretary of state in 1619. He served in Parliament again from 1621. He helped James I by communicating the king's policies to other members of Parliament.

Calvert declared himself a Roman Catholic in 1624. He gave up his political career in Parliament in 1625. The king then rewarded Calvert for his service by making him Baron Baltimore, or Lord Baltimore, in Ireland. He also received a grant of large estates in Ireland, where he and his family moved.

A New Colony

In 1623 Lord Baltimore received a charter for a colony, Avalon, in Newfoundland, Canada. He wanted the colony to be a place where people of all religions, including Roman Catholics, could worship as they wanted. He visited the colony in 1627. Lord Baltimore returned in 1628 with his family and other colonists.

The location was not ideal, so they sailed to Virginia. Lord Baltimore hoped they could use some of the land around the Chesapeake Bay for a new colony. He then sailed back to England and asked King Charles I for a charter for the land. Lord Baltimore died on April 15, 1632, just before the Maryland charter passed.

The Calvert Family

George's eldest son, Cecil, became the next Lord Baltimore. Charles I granted Cecil the charter to Maryland in June 1632. George's second son, Leonard, became the first governor of the colony of Maryland. The Calvert family is considered Maryland's founding family.

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ARTICLE

James Oglethorpe

James Oglethorpe was an English general and the founder of the colony of Georgia in North America. He planned the colony as a place for the very poor and for people persecuted for their religion.



James Oglethorpe founded the English colony of Georgia in 1733.

Courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London

James Edward Oglethorpe was born on December 22, 1696, in London, England. He was born into a wealthy family. He was well educated and attended the University of Oxford. Oglethorpe entered the military and served on the European continent. He returned to England and entered Parliament in 1722.

In 1729 Oglethorpe served on a committee in Parliament that brought about prison reforms. This inspired him to found a colony in North America where the very poor could get a new start. In 1733 he and 120 settlers sailed for the new colony. They founded the city of Savannah upon their arrival. The colony was named after King George II.

In 1736 Oglethorpe and colonists built Fort Frederica to help defend their colony against the Spanish in the area. In 1742 the Spanish sent thousands of men to destroy the settlement at Frederica. The British won the battle, which ended the Spanish claim to Georgia.

Oglethorpe returned to England in 1743. He died at Cranham Hall, Essex, England, on June 30, 1785.

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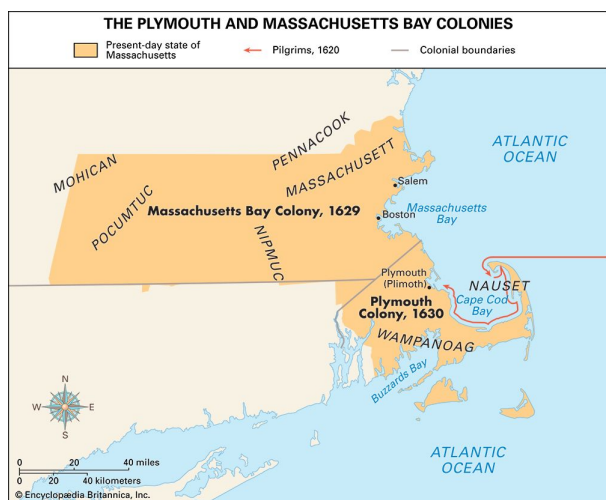
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ARTICLE

Massachusetts Bay Colony

In 1630 a group of people called Puritans left England for North America. The settlement they started in America was called the Massachusetts Bay Colony.



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The Puritans were a group of Protestant Christians with strict religious beliefs. They disagreed with some practices of England’s official church, the Church of England. The English government mistreated them because of their beliefs. The Puritans wanted to find a place where they could practice their religion in peace. In 1629 King Charles I of England gave a group of Puritans permission to trade and settle in America. The group was called the Massachusetts Bay Company.

The Massachusetts Bay Company sent more than 1,000 Puritans across the Atlantic Ocean in 1630. They were the first settlers of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Their leader was John Winthrop. They set up their own government and started several towns. Boston was the most important town.

The Puritans did not allow people who disagreed with their religious beliefs to live in the colony. Roger Williams was one of the people who was forced to leave. He then founded the colony of Rhode Island.

Trouble gradually built up between England and the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The king had not wanted the colonists to govern themselves. In 1684 King Charles II put the Massachusetts Bay Company out of business. In 1691 England created a new Massachusetts Bay Colony by combining the old colony with Plymouth Colony (which had been settled by other Puritans, now known as the Pilgrims) and other lands. The new colony was controlled by the English government.

Citation (MLA style):

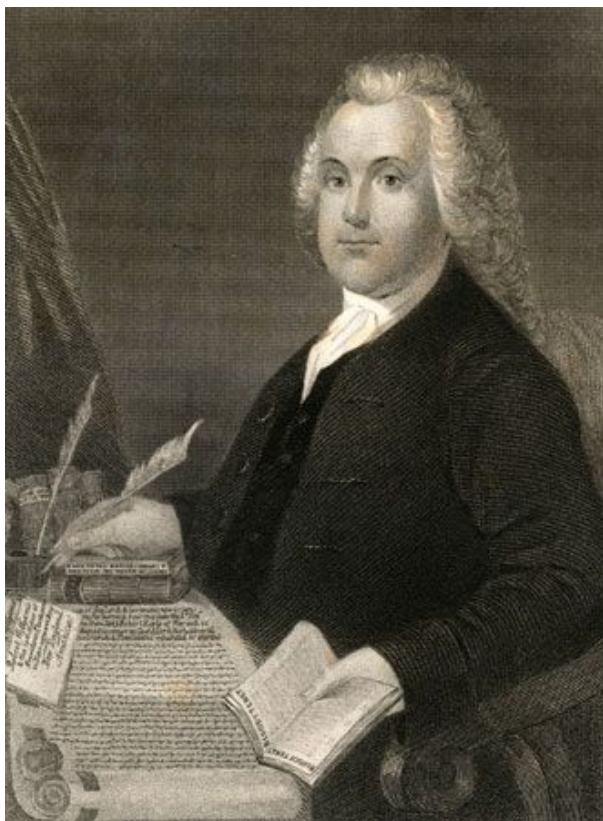
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ARTICLE

Roger Williams

Roger Williams founded Rhode Island, one of the 13 colonies that became the United States of America. Williams was a strong supporter of religious freedom. He also thought that religion and government should be kept separate.



Roger Williams

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library (424056)

Early Life

Williams was born in about 1603 in London, England. His father was a tailor. Williams studied at the University of Cambridge and became a clergyman. However, he soon became opposed to the Church of England. At the time, a number of people who disagreed with the official church were leaving England. Many of them settled in colonies in North America. Williams decided to join them.

North America

Williams arrived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631. He lived for a time in Salem, Massachusetts, and in the Plymouth Colony. But Williams often quarrelled with the colonies' leaders. He thought that the leaders should not be involved in religious issues. He also thought that the local Native Americans should be paid for the land on which the English settled. Colonial leaders were shocked by those ideas. In 1635 they forced Williams to leave Massachusetts.

Williams took shelter with the Narraganset people. He purchased land from them, and in 1636 Williams and his followers settled there. Williams called the settlement Providence Plantations. Soon other settlements were built in the region. Together they became known as Rhode Island. The colony welcomed Quakers, Anabaptists, and others who could not practice their religion freely.

Soon Massachusetts and other nearby colonies tried to take over Rhode Island. To protect his colony, Williams went to England to gain a charter—a document making Rhode Island an official English colony. The colony's first charter was obtained in 1644. (A second charter, granted in 1663, stayed in effect until 1842.)

Williams served as the president of the colony from 1654 to 1657. He also worked as a farmer, trader, and writer. He remained an important figure in Providence until his death there in 1683.

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ARTICLE

United States history

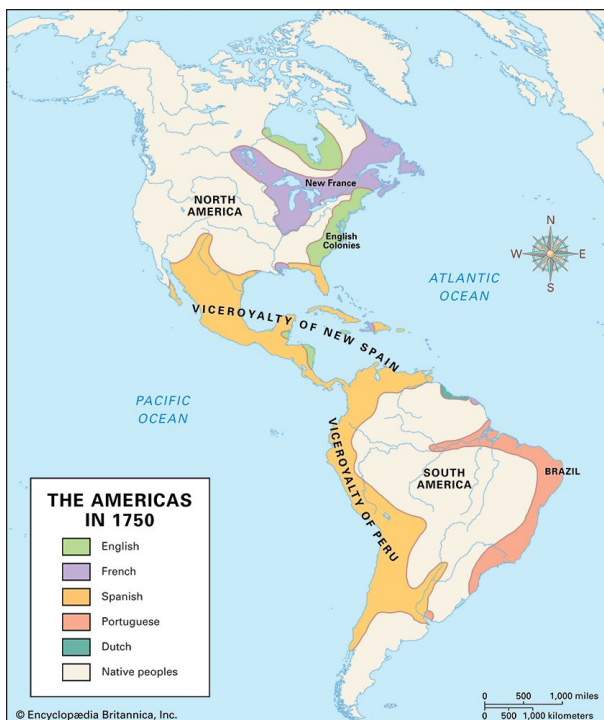
The land that became the United States has been inhabited for some 60,000 years. The first people to live on the land were hunters who most likely migrated to North America from Asia. Eventually these people and their descendants—the Native Americans—spread across North and South America.

Europeans Arrive in the Americas

The history of the Americas forever changed when the explorer Christopher Columbus arrived from Spain in 1492. This voyage and three later ones revealed vast new lands to the Europeans. The continents of North and South America and the nearby islands became known as the New World. Columbus' discovery began an era of European exploration and colonization that had a devastating effect on the Native Americans. Many died of diseases carried by the Europeans. Others were killed in warfare or forced into slavery.

When the king and queen of Spain learned of what Columbus had found, they laid claim to much of the new lands. The Spanish established colonies in the West Indies, Mexico, Central America, and South America.

The first Spanish explorer to reach the shores of what is now the United States was Juan Ponce de León. He landed in what is now Florida in 1513 and claimed it for his country. Through later explorations, Spain also established control over what is now the southwestern United States.



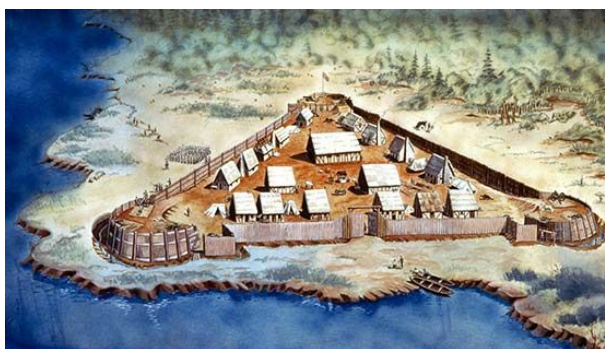
By 1750, five European powers had taken control of large areas of the Americas.

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Meanwhile, three other countries also became interested in the new land: England, France, and the Netherlands. In 1497 the Englishman John Cabot explored the coast of what is now eastern Canada. England laid claim to North America based on this voyage, though for decades it made little effort to colonize the land. In 1524 a French expedition commanded by Giovanni de Verrazzano explored the coast of North America from North Carolina northward to Canada. Ten years later another French expedition led by Jacques Cartier sailed up the Saint Lawrence River. In 1609 Henry Hudson, in command of a Dutch ship, sailed into New York Bay and up the river that later was named after him. (*See also* Americas, Exploration and Settlement of the.)

The Colonial Period

The 13 Colonies Are Established



The first colonists built Jamestown on a marshy piece of land on the James River in what is now the state of Virginia.

MPI/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The English founded their first permanent settlement on the continent at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. In 1619 the people of Virginia organized the first representative assembly in America. This was the House of Burgesses (or citizens).

The second English colony to be established in America was Plymouth. It was founded by the Pilgrims in 1620. The Pilgrims were a group of Protestants who left England because they objected to some of the beliefs and practices of the Church of England. They crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a ship called the *Mayflower*. After landing in what became the state of Massachusetts, they established their colony. Near Plymouth, another group of English Protestants called the Puritans founded the larger Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630. The Puritans also had left England because of disagreements with the Church of England. Plymouth Colony was made part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691.

English colonies spread along the coast near Massachusetts and Virginia in the 1620s and 1630s. Permanent settlements were made in what is now New Hampshire in 1623. People from the Massachusetts Bay Colony established the colonies of Connecticut in 1635 and Rhode Island in 1636. Maryland, just north of Virginia, was settled in 1634.

Meanwhile, in 1624, Dutch settlers had founded a colony called New Netherland in the area of the Hudson River. The English colonists in New England and Virginia viewed the Dutch as intruders. In 1664 an English fleet seized the Dutch colony. The English changed its name from New Netherland to New York. The English also seized nearby New Jersey and Delaware from the Dutch in 1664. Pennsylvania was founded in 1681 by an English Quaker named William Penn.

South of Virginia, the land known as Carolina was settled by the English during the second half of the 1700s. In 1729 the territory was divided into the colonies of North and South Carolina. Georgia, the last of the original 13 colonies, was settled in 1733.

Early Relations with the Native Americans

Life in the colonies was influenced by the Native American tribes that had lived on the land since long before the Europeans arrived. The early colonists adopted Native American foods and herbs, methods of raising crops, war techniques, and words. Some of the colonists established friendly relations with the Native Americans living near them. Over the years, however, the interaction between the colonists and the Native Americans turned more often to conflict.

Colonial Government and Economy

Most of the colonies established assemblies similar to the English Parliament to govern themselves. Only citizens who owned property or paid taxes, however, were allowed to vote or to become a member of the assembly. In New England, where most of the people lived in villages and towns, local government was conducted in town meetings. In the South, where most people lived on large farms and plantations, the county was the basis for local government.

Most of the early colonists were farmers because they had to grow their own food. In time, however, the living patterns of the colonists changed. In New England people turned their land over to livestock raising and began lumbering, shipbuilding, and fishing industries. In the South colonists grew tobacco, rice, and indigo, which they traded with other colonies and with England. The large plantations in the South were worked by enslaved peoples brought from Africa. The colonists of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania grew grains for their own use and for export.

Expansion of the Colonies

Along with economic development, the colonies steadily made gains in such areas as religious freedom, education, travel, communication, and self-government. These advancements led to rapid population growth. In

1700 about 250,000 people lived in the 13 colonies. By 1760 this number had reached nearly 1.7 million. Many of the newcomers had come from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, and France. Part of the population growth, however, was due to huge increases in the number of African slaves brought to the colonies. By 1765, for example, Black people outnumbered white people in South Carolina by about 2 to 1.

As the population of the colonies grew, people began to expand their settlements westward. This brought them into conflict with the Native Americans already living in the territory. The colonists and the Native Americans often fought for control of the land. In nearly every struggle the outcome was the same: the Europeans pushed the Native Americans farther and farther from their homelands.

The expansion of the colonies also heightened tensions between the English and the French. French people had settled in the Saint Lawrence Valley, the Great Lakes region, and the Mississippi Valley. The English and French soon came into conflict over fishing rights, the fur trade, and Native American alliances. There was also bitter hostility between France and England in Europe. Between 1689 and 1748 the two countries fought three separate wars, both in Europe and in America. In 1754 French and British forces began another conflict, which came to be called the French and Indian War. The war ended in 1763 with the defeat of France and its Native American allies. The victory gave Great Britain control over all French lands in Canada and between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. Britain had become the supreme power in North America.

The American Revolution

After the French and Indian War, relations between the British government and the American colonies began to break down. For more than 150 years the colonies had been developing their own society, economy, and some self-government. The British had governed them only lightly. But in 1763 this began to change. The British decided that the colonies should help pay for the cost of the war just ended and for their future defense.

Events Leading to the Revolution

The British Parliament passed a series of acts (laws) calling for taxes on colonial trade. The colonists argued that because the colonies did not have representatives in the English Parliament, it was wrong for the British to tax them. Many colonists refused to pay the taxes and organized protests. Sometimes they clashed with British forces. In 1770 British soldiers fired into an angry mob in Boston. Five Americans were killed in the incident, which became known as the Boston Massacre. In 1773, in response to a tax on tea, colonists disguised as Native Americans dumped tea from British ships into Boston Harbor. This event was later called the Boston Tea Party.

First and Second Continental Congresses Meet



George Washington stands at a session of the Continental Congress, in an illustration from about 1876.

Currier & Ives Collection, Library of Congress, Neg. No. LC-USZC2-3154

The British government responded to the Tea Party by passing restrictive laws that angered the colonists even more. In 1774 representatives from all 13 colonies except Georgia met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to discuss their complaints against the British government. This meeting was called the First Continental Congress. A few representatives from New England and Virginia talked about gaining independence from Britain. Most of the representatives, however, favored putting pressure on Parliament by refusing to trade with Britain. This approach failed, and in April 1775 fighting broke out in Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts, between colonists and British troops. The colonists were known as minutemen because they could be ready to fight at a moment's notice. These battles began the American Revolution.

The Second Continental Congress met in Philadelphia in May 1775. The representatives chose George Washington to command the colonial troops. In 1776 Thomas Jefferson and other representatives drafted a statement calling for separation from Britain. This document, called the Declaration of Independence, was adopted by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

Independence

The war for independence did not go well for the colonists at first. General Washington barely managed to keep his small army together because of defeats and lack of supplies. Finally the tide turned in the colonists' favor in 1777, when the British were defeated at the Battles of Saratoga in New York. After that victory, France joined the colonies in their war against Britain. The fighting ended in 1781 with the surrender of the British at Yorktown, Virginia. By the Treaty of Paris in 1783, Britain recognized the independence of the American colonies. The new nation extended from Canada on the north to Florida on the south and westward to the Mississippi River. (See *also* Revolution, American.)

The New Nation

The Constitution

Before the war ended, the Second Continental Congress drafted a plan of government called the Articles of Confederation. The Articles, adopted in 1781, provided for a loose union of states and kept most of the powers of government for the individual states. It soon became clear that the Articles were not adequate for governing the growing nation.

In 1787 a convention was held in Philadelphia to amend the Articles of Confederation. Soon the representatives decided to draft an entirely new constitution. The new document was approved by the states in 1788 and took effect in 1789. The Constitution provided for a federal type of government: a union of states under a strong central government. The first 10 amendments to the Constitution—known as the Bill of Rights—were adopted in 1791. (See *also* United States Constitution.)

The first elections under the new Constitution were held in 1789. George Washington became the first president. Alexander Hamilton, the secretary of the treasury, and others who believed in a strong central government came to be called Federalists. Thomas Jefferson and his followers, who feared that the national government might exercise too much power, were called Anti-Federalists, or Republicans. These groups marked the beginning of political parties in the United States.

Westward Expansion

After the United States became independent, people began to move into the region between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River. The first states created west of the Appalachians were Kentucky in 1792

and Tennessee in 1796. Most of the people who lived in the West were farmers. They shipped their farm products down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to New Orleans for shipping outside the country.



The Louisiana Purchase greatly increased the territory of the United States.

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The Louisiana Purchase doubled the size of the United States.

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At the time, New Orleans and the surrounding area were French territories. In 1803 Thomas Jefferson, who had been elected president in 1800, decided that the United States should buy New Orleans and the land along the lower Mississippi River from France. In a surprise move, France agreed to sell all of its land west of the Mississippi to the United States for about 15 million dollars. This land was known as the Louisiana Territory, and the deal was called the Louisiana Purchase. It nearly doubled the size of the United States. Between 1804 and 1806 Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led an exploration of this territory (see Lewis and Clark Expedition). The movement into the lands west of the Appalachians then became a flood. The United States also expanded to the south. In 1819 Spain signed a treaty that gave Florida to the United States.

The New Country's Foreign Policies

Foreign affairs caused the United States much concern during the early 1800s. Wars between Britain and France interfered with U.S. trade. To make matters worse, the British began stopping U.S. ships to search for British seamen who had deserted. Sometimes they forced U.S. sailors to serve on British ships. In 1812 the United States declared war on Britain. The two countries fought for more than two years. Neither side was able to win a clear victory before a peace treaty was signed in 1814. (See also War of 1812.)

During the early 1800s Spain's colonies in Central and South America declared themselves independent. Later Spain tried to regain control over these colonies, and it appeared that some European powers might help. President James Monroe responded by issuing the Monroe Doctrine in 1823. It stated that North and South America were no longer open to colonization. It also declared that the United States would not allow European countries to interfere with independent governments in the Western Hemisphere. From then on the Monroe Doctrine was a key part of U.S. foreign policy.

Developments in Industry and Transportation

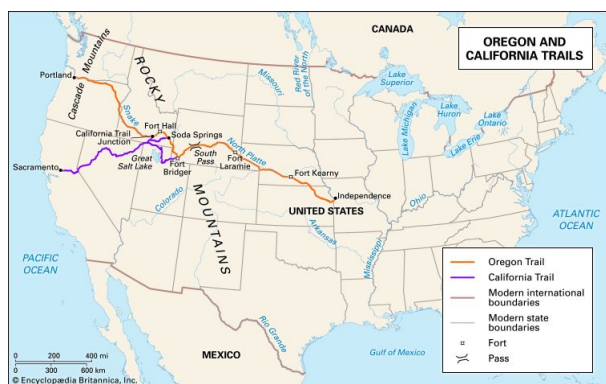
The 1800s was a period of great industrial growth in the United States. An important development was Eli Whitney’s invention of the cotton gin in 1793. This machine speeded up the process of separating seeds from cotton fibers. It led to a major expansion of the textile industry. It also caused the growing of cotton to spread throughout the Southern states. Farmers in the North were helped by other inventions, such as Cyrus McCormick’s mechanical reaper for harvesting grain. Ironworks were set up to manufacture these farm tools, along with household utensils, factory machines, and other items.

A key part of the economic growth of the United States in the 1800s was the development of better means of transportation. Goods had to be shipped from factories to farms and from farms to towns and cities. To meet this need, new roads and canals were built. The Erie Canal, opened in 1825, connected Lake Erie with the Hudson River. It provided a major boost to shipping between New York City and the Great Lakes region. The invention and improvement of the steam engine led to even more important developments in transportation and trade. The first successful steamboat was built by Robert Fulton. It made its first voyage on the Hudson in 1807. In the early 1830s the first American railroads were built. Thousands of miles of track were laid in the following decades.

Manifest Destiny

Improvements in transportation encouraged further expansion to the west. The growth of the United States was also encouraged by an idea called manifest destiny. In the mid-1800s many Americans came to believe that the United States was destined to expand westward to the Pacific Ocean, and even beyond. But the push toward the Pacific coast led to conflict with foreign powers. Mexico owned Texas, California, and much of the Southwest. The British had a strong claim to Oregon. In each case Americans first penetrated and then won complete control of the area.

The conquest of the Mexican territories began in Texas. In 1836 Americans who had settled in Texas revolted against Mexican rule and declared their independence. Nine years later Texas became part of the United States. The addition of Texas to the United States led to a conflict known as the Mexican-American War, which lasted from 1846 to 1848. After Mexico was defeated, the United States took possession of Texas, California, and almost the entire Southwest. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 attracted tens of thousands of newcomers to the Pacific coast.



The Oregon Trail began in the U.S. state of Missouri and ended in what is now Oregon.

Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc./Kenny Chmielewski

Meanwhile, pioneers had begun following the Oregon Trail to the Pacific Northwest. Heavy migration to Oregon won the region for the United States. In 1846 the United States and Britain agreed on the boundary line between British Canada and the United States.

The Country Divides and Reunites

Dissension in the Union

The westward expansion of the United States heightened tensions over the issue of slavery. The growth of cotton and tobacco plantations in the South had made the Southern economy increasingly dependent on slave labor. Meanwhile, many Americans, especially in the northern states, began to oppose slavery. They wanted to abolish (end) the practice because they thought it was wrong. By 1804 all of the states north of Maryland had abolished slavery. (See *also* abolitionist movement.)

This difference of opinion regarding slavery led to conflict when the new Western territories began to apply for admission to the Union (the United States). When Missouri asked to be admitted as a “slave” state—one that allowed slavery—the northern states objected. In 1820 Congress reached an agreement known as the Missouri Compromise. Missouri entered the Union as a slave state and Maine entered as a “free” state—one that prohibited slavery. In addition, slavery was prohibited north of the southern border of Missouri. Another compromise over slavery came in 1850. California had asked to join the Union as a free state. California was admitted as a free state, and slavery was prohibited in the District of Columbia. But the people who lived in the rest of the territory that had been won in the Mexican-American War were to decide for themselves whether they would have slavery.

Many people thought that these compromises had solved the matter of slavery for good. In 1854, however, Congress passed the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act. This law permitted the Kansas and Nebraska territories—both north of the Missouri Compromise line—to decide whether they should have slavery. People from both the North and South rushed into Kansas to help decide the matter, and fighting broke out. Eventually, in 1861, Kansas was admitted as a free state.

The Civil War

Slavery was the main campaign issue in the presidential election of 1860. Abraham Lincoln of the antislavery Republican Party became the new president. Shortly after Lincoln’s election, the Southern states began to secede (withdraw) from the Union. They formed the Confederate States of America and elected Jefferson Davis of Mississippi as president.



A modern photograph shows Fort Sumter from above. The first shots of the American Civil War were fired at the fort.

Photos.com/Jupiterimages

The American Civil War began in April 1861 when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Neither side was ready for war, but the North had more ships, railroads, soldiers, and supplies. Fierce battles were fought in both the East and the West. In 1863 Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, a document that freed enslaved people in the Southern states. In that same year the Union Army won major battles at Gettysburg in Pennsylvania and Vicksburg in Mississippi. But fighting continued until April 1865, when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. (See *also* Civil War, American.)

Reconstruction

Only a few days after the close of the war, Lincoln was assassinated, and Vice President Andrew Johnson became president. At the close of the war the South lay in ruins, for most of the fighting had occurred there. Nevertheless, the Republicans who controlled Congress after the war still wanted to punish the Southern states for leaving the Union. The South was placed under military rule, and new state governments were formed. The new governments were made to accept the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which provided citizenship to all of the former enslaved people. The Southern states were readmitted to the Union between 1866 and 1870.

In the decade after the war, plantation farming by enslaved people was replaced by the sharecropping system. Sharecroppers farmed a piece of land owned by someone else in return for a share of the crops that they produced. The very low incomes provided by this system forced a miserable existence on Black people that was little better than slavery. This difficult period of political, social, and economic changes in the South after the Civil War is known as Reconstruction.

Growth of the Nation

The population of the United States in 1880 was slightly more than 50 million. In 1900 it was almost 76 million, a gain of more than 50 percent. Much of the population increase was due to millions of immigrants who entered the country during this period. They sought new jobs and new homes in a prosperous land. Many came from northern or western Europe, as they had since the earliest days of the republic. Beginning in the 1890s, however, the majority of the immigrants arrived from southern or eastern Europe—largely Italy, Poland, Greece, and Russia. Most of them settled in big cities such as Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Chicago. Many other Americans moved from farms to cities during this period as well.

Movement to the West

As the cities grew, other Americans continued moving westward across the vast, mostly unpopulated plains in the country's heartland. Some sought mineral wealth. In the 30 years after the discovery of gold in California, prospectors found gold or silver in every state and territory of the Far West. Others began to raise cattle on the open ranges of such states as Texas, Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakotas. The expansion of the railroads provided a way for the cattle ranchers to ship their goods to the East and West. The first railroad to cross the entire country was completed in Utah in 1869.

Treatment of Native Americans

The government had set aside large tracts of land in the West for the use of Native American tribes. But these lands were invaded during the westward movement of the prospectors, cattlemen, farmers, and railroads. By 1870 these invasions had resulted in the outbreak of a series of savage wars between the Native Americans and

the white settlers. By the late 1880s most Native Americans had been forced off their lands and onto reservations. The final defeat of the Native Americans came in the battle of Wounded Knee in South Dakota in 1890.

Industrial Development

The movement of people from farms to cities was a sign of the tremendous industrial growth in the United States during the late 1800s and early 1900s. People went to the cities to work in the rapidly expanding factories. In the 1880s and 1890s industrial production and the number of workers employed in industry more than doubled.

Many factors combined to produce this burst of industrial activity. The construction of railroads led to increased demand for steel rails and the growth of the steel industry. A new method of steelmaking—called the Bessemer process—resulted in improved products. The coming of the gasoline engine led to the development of the automobile and of the airplane. By 1893 the Duryea brothers had made the first successful gasoline-driven automobile in the United States. Within a decade several people, including Henry Ford, had built factories to manufacture cars. In 1903 Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first successful flight in an airplane. The production of aircraft had just started when World War I began in 1914.

Advancements in manufacturing procedures during this period made factories much more productive. In 1913, for example, Henry Ford introduced the assembly-line method of making cars. In this method each worker performed only one step in the manufacturing process. Splitting up the work in this way is known as the division of labor. By the beginning of the 1900s factories were producing all sorts of goods, from locomotives and farm machinery to household utensils. Through developments in transportation and sales techniques, all kinds of goods and services became available to almost everyone.

This industrial activity was led by a group of powerful businessmen. The best known were Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. They were among the first people in the United States to organize business on a large scale. Carnegie made a fortune as the leader of the enormous expansion of the steel industry. Rockefeller grew wealthy after founding the Standard Oil Company, which dominated oil production in the United States.

Reform Movements

As industry developed, competing firms began joining together to form large organizations capable of dominating an entire industry. These organizations were called trusts. Because they had no competition, trusts could control production within an industry and set high prices for their goods. Many people, including small business owners and workers, protested against the trusts. In 1890 Congress passed the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, which outlawed practices that allowed trusts to gain a monopoly (complete control) of an industry. In 1914 Congress created an agency called the Federal Trade Commission to prevent unfair methods of business competition.

Even with the restrictions placed on industry, individual workers found it difficult to protect their rights as businesses expanded. To deal with this problem, workers joined together in labor unions. The first important national labor organization in the United States was the Knights of Labor (KOL), founded in 1869. In the late 1800s the American Federation of Labor (AFL) replaced the KOL as the country's most powerful union. The AFL brought together craft and trade unions (such as the carpenters' union) into a loose federation. It worked for reforms such as the establishment of a shorter workday and workweek. In the 1900s the AFL merged with another labor federation, the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), to form the AFL-CIO.

The labor movements also helped improve working conditions for women and children. Another victory for women in this period was the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution. This amendment, adopted in 1919, gave women the right to vote.

New Territories

In the second half of the 1800s the United States took over lands that lay far beyond its borders. In 1867 Russia sold Alaska to the United States for 7.2 million dollars. In 1898 the United States claimed possession of the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Alaska and Hawaii would be made states in 1959.

In 1898 the United States and Spain went to war because of U.S. support for the independence movement in Cuba, which was then ruled by Spain. At the close of the war the United States gained control over Puerto Rico and the island of Guam. The United States also took possession of the Philippines after paying Spain 20 million dollars. Cuba was granted independence. This conflict, known as the Spanish-American War, began the rise of the United States as a world power.

Around this time the United States became interested in building a canal across the Central American country of Panama. The waterway would provide a valuable short cut for ships traveling between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. At the time Colombia ruled Panama. When Colombia objected to U.S. plans for the project, Panama declared its independence. The United States immediately recognized Panama as an independent country. Two weeks later the two countries signed a treaty that allowed the United States to build the canal. Construction began in 1904, and the Panama Canal opened in 1914.

World War I

The United States paid a price for its growing status in world politics. In 1914 war broke out in Europe. On one side were the Central Powers—Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria. On the other side were the Allies—more than 20 nations led by Britain and France. The United States tried to remain neutral. The American people reelected President Woodrow Wilson in 1916 partly because he had kept the country out of the war. By 1917, however, the United States found it impossible to remain outside the struggle. Soon after German submarines began sinking U.S. ships, the United States declared war on the Central Powers. Two million U.S. soldiers helped the Allies to victory on the battlefields of Europe. The fighting ended in November 1918. (*See also* World War I.)

The peace treaty that officially ended the war was signed in Versailles, France, in 1919. President Wilson insisted that the treaty provide for the creation of the League of Nations. This organization was designed to maintain peace among the countries of the world. The United States Senate rejected the Treaty of Versailles, however. As a result, the United States never joined the League of Nations.

From Prosperity to Depression

After the difficult war years, the United States hoped for a return to what was called “normalcy.” Americans wanted to put reminders of the war behind them. And for most of the 1920s they enjoyed peace and prosperity. Business boomed, providing many jobs at good wages. Banks loaned money freely to farmers and businessmen to buy land and machinery. Consumers demanded and received an endless variety of goods—from refrigerators and radios to new homes and cars. Millions of people began buying stocks and bonds in the hope of making quick profits.

Many Americans began to think that prosperity had come to stay. In October 1929, however, a financial panic occurred. Prices on the stock market tumbled as thousands of stockholders tried to sell their stocks. The stock market crash was the beginning of a severe worldwide financial downturn known as the Great Depression.

Herbert Hoover, who had been elected president in 1928, and Congress took steps to try to improve the economy. But when the presidential election of 1932 arrived, millions of U.S. workers were still without jobs. Years of poor land use combined with drought to turn large rural areas in the West into a so-called “dust bowl.” Farmers lost their farms when they could not repay loans to banks. Banks closed because they were unable to collect the loans they had made. State and local governments were no longer able to provide relief payments to the unemployed. Amid these difficult conditions, voters elected Franklin D. Roosevelt to replace Hoover. The new president promised a “New Deal” in the United States.

The New Deal

Roosevelt began work on the New Deal as soon as he took office in 1933. He encouraged Congress to pass laws to help banks that were in trouble and to reopen closed banks. Other new laws provided relief for the unemployed and encouraged industry and agriculture. New public-works projects provided work for millions of people. Perhaps the most far-reaching New Deal measure was the Social Security Act, passed in 1935. It provided financial assistance to people of retirement age, to the blind, and to mothers and dependent children. It also set up a system of unemployment insurance. The Social Security system was later expanded to provide benefits for more workers.

By the end of the 1930s the United States had made some progress toward recovering from the depression. Factory production had increased and more people were back at work. Farmers were enjoying better incomes. But what ultimately pulled the country out of the depression was the production of supplies for World War II.

World War II

War broke out in Europe in 1939 when Germany attacked Poland. Germany was led at the time by the Nazi party of Adolf Hitler. In response to the invasion of Poland, Britain and France declared war on Germany. Soon Germany was joined by Italy and Japan. These countries formed the Axis powers. The countries opposed to the Axis powers were called the Allies.

In the early part of the war the United States supported the Allies by supplying military aid. At the same time it began to strengthen its own armed forces. The question of how much and what type of additional aid should be given to the Allies was a major issue of the presidential election of 1940. Roosevelt was elected to a third term. He was the first U.S. president to serve more than two terms.

United States Enters the War

Soon U.S. involvement in the war changed drastically. On December 7, 1941, Japanese planes attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The surprise attack crippled the U.S. fleet. The United States declared war on Japan the next day. Three days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.

War at Home and Abroad

Millions of American men and women joined the military. Industry was expanded to produce ships, tanks, planes, and other war supplies. By 1944 U.S. factories were producing twice as much as all the factories of Germany, Italy, and Japan combined. In the months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, however, the United States was not

prepared to begin fighting in the Pacific. The Japanese were able to capture the Philippines and other Pacific islands. But in June 1942 Allied forces defeated the Japanese on Midway Island. This battle was the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

Meanwhile, U.S. forces fought with other Allied troops in Europe and North Africa. Italy surrendered in September 1943, leaving Germany to fight alone in Europe. On June 6, 1944, Allied forces invaded France. This attack is known as the D-Day invasion. For months thereafter Germany fought a losing battle against advancing Soviet armies in the east and Allied armies in the west. Germany surrendered in May 1945, ending the war in Europe.

End of the War and Plans for Peace

The war in the Pacific ended a few months later. In August 1945 the United States dropped atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These new, very powerful weapons devastated the cities and killed tens of thousands of people. Japan surrendered within days of the second bombing. (*See also* World War II.)

Even before the end of the war, Allied leaders had taken steps aimed at ensuring the future peace of the world. In April 1945 representatives from 50 countries met in San Francisco to plan the organization of the United Nations (UN). The purpose of the UN was to promote peace and to advance the social, economic, and political progress of all peoples of the world.

The Cold War Begins

During World War II the United States and the Soviet Union worked together against a common enemy. When peace came, however, a rivalry developed between the two great powers. The United States became the leader of the Western nations, which mostly had democratic governments. The Soviet Union, with a Communist government, achieved dominance over eastern Europe. The Soviets also encouraged the rise of Communism in other parts of the world. The United States was determined to stop Communism from spreading. The tense competition between the United States and the Soviet Union became known as the Cold War.

New foreign policies announced by the United States in the late 1940s were aimed at combating Communism. One major new policy was the Truman Doctrine, named after Harry S. Truman, who had become president upon the death of Roosevelt in 1945. It provided money and military aid to countries that were threatened by the spread of Communism. Another new policy was the Marshall Plan, named after secretary of state George C. Marshall. It offered money to the countries of Europe so that they could recover from the war. The United States believed that creating stable economies in European countries would help them stay free of Communist influence. In 1949 the United States joined Canada and 10 European countries in forming the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) as a defense against possible Soviet attacks.

Korean War

In 1950 war broke out in Asia. Troops sent by the Soviet-supported, Communist government of North Korea invaded South Korea. They wanted to unite the country under Communist rule. The UN Security Council voted to help to South Korea, and the United States and other UN countries sent troops. Chinese Communist troops went to the aid of North Korea. This conflict became known as the Korean War. The war ended in 1953 with the establishment of a neutral zone between North and South Korea. (*See also* Korean War.)

The Space Race

The Cold War expanded into the realm of space exploration in 1957. In October of that year the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite to orbit the Earth. The achievement stunned the United States. In

response, the government of President Dwight D. Eisenhower encouraged space research in the United States. The first U.S. satellite, Explorer 1, was launched in January 1958. In 1969 the United States landed the first man on the moon.

Cuba

One of the most serious issues to develop after World War II was that of the spread of nuclear weapons. Both the United States and the Soviet Union built up large arsenals of such weapons. Tensions between the two powers often led to fears of nuclear warfare. These fears reached new levels in 1962, when the U.S. government learned that the Soviet Union had set up nuclear missiles in Cuba. Communists had taken control of Cuba in 1959. U.S. President John F. Kennedy demanded that the missiles be removed. Many people feared war. After two tense weeks, however, the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missiles. This confrontation is known as the Cuban missile crisis.

Civil Rights



Martin Luther King, Jr., waves to the crowd during the March on Washington. The march was one of the most famous events of the civil rights movement. In August 1963 some 250,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C., to urge Congress to pass a civil rights law.

AP Images

The 1960s was a troubled decade at home as well. One especially notable development was the growth of the civil rights movement. More and more African Americans began protesting against laws that were unfair to them. They had already won an important victory in 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public schools could no longer be segregated—that is, white and Black students could not be required to go to different schools. The best-known leader of the civil rights movement was Martin Luther King, Jr. He used nonviolent methods such as marches to draw attention to his causes.

The civil rights movement had a great impact on the United States and its leaders. President Kennedy stressed civil rights legislation and submitted a major civil rights bill to Congress in June 1963. On November 22, 1963, however, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson immediately took over as president. He successfully urged Congress to pass the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964. Johnson also supported a number of other social reforms, including increased funds for education and antipoverty measures. Despite these efforts, however, many Black people were dissatisfied with the slow progress they were making. In the mid-1960s race riots broke out in most of the nation's large cities. Rioting began again after Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in 1968.

Vietnam War and Watergate

The biggest problem faced by President Johnson was war in Vietnam. Since the late 1950s rebels supported by the Communist government of North Vietnam had been trying to overthrow the anti-Communist government of South Vietnam. Kennedy had sent military advisers and supplies to the South Vietnamese. Under Johnson, U.S. participation in the war greatly expanded. The United States sent soldiers and began bombing the North. By the end of 1967 about 500,000 United States troops were in South Vietnam. The huge cost of the war and the growing casualties upset many Americans, especially young people. Protests against the war took place throughout the country. Johnson became unpopular and chose not to run for reelection in 1968.

Richard M. Nixon followed Johnson as president. At first he continued to support the war. Soon, however, Nixon began pulling U.S. troops out of Vietnam. A peace treaty was signed in 1973, but fighting continued after the U.S. departure (see Vietnam War). Nixon's historic visit to Communist China in 1972 led to the establishment of official relations between the United States and that country. Later that year Nixon was reelected. But after the election an investigation showed that Nixon had been involved in illegal activities that helped him win. As a result of this scandal—known as Watergate—Nixon resigned from the presidency in 1974. Vice President Gerald R. Ford became president.

The economy was a problem during the terms of both Ford and the next president, Jimmy Carter. Energy shortages during the late 1970s led to attempts to get the United States to rely less on imported oil. In 1977 the United States and Panama signed treaties in which the United States agreed to turn over control of the Panama Canal in 1999. In November 1979 a group of Iranians seized the U.S. embassy in Teheran, Iran. They held the Americans inside the embassy as hostages until January 1981.

End of the Cold War

The Reagan and Bush Presidencies

In the 1980 presidential election Ronald Reagan defeated Carter to become the 40th president. He was reelected in 1984. In his second term Reagan supported Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's efforts to achieve economic and social changes in the Soviet Union. The two leaders also signed the intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) treaty in 1987. The treaty was a step toward reducing the nuclear threat in the two countries.

In 1989 Reagan was succeeded by his vice president, George H.W. Bush. Initially Bush worked with Congress to resolve economic problems at home. Overall, however, he was more active in foreign affairs. During his term the Cold War came to an end. In 1989 the Berlin Wall was torn down, and in 1991 the Soviet Union broke apart. Bush signed two nuclear arms treaties, one with Soviet leader Gorbachev and the second with Russian President Boris Yeltsin after the Soviet Union had dissolved.

In 1990 the country of Iraq invaded the neighboring country of Kuwait. The United States led a group of countries in a war against Iraq. This short conflict was known as the Persian Gulf War. It began in January 1991 and ended six weeks later with the defeat of Iraq.

Into the 21st Century

The Clinton Presidency



Janet Reno was the first woman to be attorney general of the United States. She served from 1993 to 2001.

Alex Wong—Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The breakup of the Soviet Union in late 1991 left the United States as the world's only superpower. The first U.S. president to be elected following the end of the Cold War was Bill Clinton. He defeated Bush in the election of 1992 and was reelected in 1996. Under Clinton the economy improved dramatically. The Clinton government also signed the North American Free Trade Agreement, which encouraged trade between the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

Despite these economic successes, however, Clinton's presidency was troubled by several scandals. The biggest of these scandals centered on Clinton's relationship with a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. Clinton was accused of lying about the relationship. He was impeached (put on trial) by Congress. Clinton was not found guilty of the charges against him and remained in office. He was only the second president in United States history to be impeached.

The George W. Bush Presidency

The 2000 presidential election was one of the closest in U.S. history. The candidates were Clinton's vice president, Al Gore, and former president Bush's son, Governor George W. Bush of Texas. The outcome of the election remained undecided for several weeks. The votes were recounted, and in Florida there was an issue over that. Eventually the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling in favor of Bush.

During his first year in office Bush faced a major crisis—the deadliest terrorist attacks in U.S. history. In September 2001 terrorists hijacked four airplanes. They crashed two of the planes into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, destroying both buildings. The third plane was flown into the Pentagon, the center of U.S. military operations, near Washington, D.C. The fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The United States blamed Osama bin Laden for the attacks, which killed nearly 3,000 people. The United States also

accused the Taliban, the government of Afghanistan, of sheltering bin Laden and his terrorist group. Within a month the United States launched attacks against Afghanistan. By the end of the year the Taliban government had collapsed, but the fight against terrorism continued.

In 2002 President Bush turned the world's attention to Iraq. He accused the government of Iraq of having ties to terrorists. He also accused the government of ignoring a weapons ban that had been imposed on Iraq at the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. In the years since the end of the war inspectors from the UN had been sent to Iraq to make sure that Iraq had destroyed its weapons. President Saddam Hussein refused to cooperate with the inspectors, and the situation turned into an ongoing dispute.

The United States brought the matter before the UN in November 2002, and the inspectors were eventually allowed to return to Iraq. Bush soon declared that Iraq was not cooperating with the inspectors. While several member countries of the UN Security Council called for further talks between the two sides, the United States and Great Britain threatened to take military action against Iraq. In March 2003 the talks came to an end, and U. S.-led troops invaded Iraq. They soon overthrew the government of Saddam Hussein, and in December they captured the former leader. Advisers from the United States and other countries then attempted to help establish a new government in Iraq. But fighting in the country continued.

A powerful hurricane struck the southeastern United States in late August 2005. Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath claimed more than 1,800 lives. It ranked as the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history.



U.S. President George W. Bush (middle) meets with former presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter and President-elect Barack Obama in January 2009.

Joyce N. Boghosian/The White House

In 2008 the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were still going on as several candidates campaigned to become the next president. In the late summer of that year the country's economy began to develop major problems. People lost their jobs and their homes. Because of the problems at home and abroad many citizens were unhappy with the government and wanted change. The two main candidates were Barack Obama, of the Democratic Party, and John McCain, of the Republican Party. Both were members of the Senate, but McCain belonged to the same political party as President Bush. In the election held on November 4 Obama defeated McCain. Obama was the first African American to be elected president of the United States.

The Obama Presidency

During his first year in office, President Obama worked to improve the economy and to reform the health care system. In 2010 he signed a new health care law. Republicans and a new conservative movement called the Tea

Party were very critical of the law. They thought that the government should be less involved in health care. They also thought that the government needed to cut its spending. At times, debate between Democrats and Republicans became very tense.

In April 2010 an explosion on an oil drilling platform in the Gulf of Mexico caused a massive oil spill. The oil slick spread over thousands of square miles and killed many fish, birds, and other animals. The leaking oil well finally was stopped that July.

The last U.S. combat troops left Iraq in 2010, but the war in Afghanistan continued. In 2011 the United States joined in military actions against the government of Libya. Later that year U.S. forces killed bin Laden, the leader of the terrorist group al-Qaeda, in Pakistan.

In April 2011 several hundred tornadoes ripped across the southeastern United States. Hundreds of people were killed, mainly in Alabama, and many buildings were destroyed. The “Super Outbreak” of 2011 was the largest outbreak of tornadoes ever recorded.

In 2012 Obama ran for a second term as president. His opponent was Mitt Romney, a wealthy businessman who had been the governor of Massachusetts. The election was close, but Obama was reelected in November.

In 2014 an extremist Islamic group, often known as ISIL, emerged in Iraq and took over important cities in Iraq and Syria. The United States began air strikes against ISIL in August 2014. In December 2014 Obama announced that the United States would open up relations with Cuba for the first time in 50 years.

The candidates for the 2016 presidential election were former first lady and senator Hillary Clinton and businessman Donald Trump. After a close election, Trump emerged the winner.

The Trump Presidency

Trump faced two major issues in the last year of his presidency. The illness known as COVID-19 made thousands of people sick. It was caused by a coronavirus. Many people thought that Trump and his government did not do enough to keep people safe from the virus.

In May 2020 police in Minnesota killed a Black man named George Floyd. Protests erupted throughout the country and spread to other countries as well. The protestors were upset about Floyd’s death. That incident and others led to many discussions about racism and social justice, or how to make sure that everyone is treated fairly. The issue became an important one during the election of 2020. Trump ran against former vice president Joe Biden, and the two candidates had very different views on that and other subjects Biden won the election.

Trump refused to admit that Biden had won the election. He tried to change the results but was not able to do that. On January 6, 2021, Congress met to make the results official, That morning Trump held a large rally with his supporters. He encouraged them to march to the U.S. Capitol and insist that the results be overturned. They did that, and many of them violently forced their way into the Capitol. The Capitol was cleared eventually, and the Congress made the election results official.

The Biden Presidency

Biden had to face the effects of the continuing COVID-19 health crisis. Many more people became sick. It also affected the economy because people were told to stay home and not go to restaurants or other businesses. People who worked at those businesses lost their jobs. Biden made vaccines available to protect people against the disease. He also signed a law that gave payments to most people to help with the economic problems. Slowly the economy improved and the health crisis eased.

In international affairs, Biden pulled the last U.S. troops out of Afghanistan. The United States had troops in that country since 2001. Two major wars began during his presidency, in Ukraine and the Middle East.

Biden ran for reelection in 2024, but in July of that year he dropped out of the race. He supported his vice president, Kamala Harris, when she decided to run for president. She faced former president Trump. Harris lost the election in November 2024.

(See articles on individual presidents, states, cities, and geographic features.) (See also United States Constitution; United States government.)

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ARTICLE

William Penn

William Penn founded the colony of Pennsylvania in 1681. He wanted to create a place where many religious faiths would be allowed.



William Penn served in England's military as a young man.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (cph 3c06735)



William Penn established the colony of Pennsylvania.

© Photos.com/Getty Images

Early Life

William Penn was born in London, England, on October 14, 1644. His father was a wealthy admiral in the English Navy. As a young man, Penn left the Church of England and joined the Quakers.

The Quakers (also known as the Society of Friends) were a Christian group that had no ministers. Instead, they held meetings at which anyone could speak. Other Christians saw the Quakers as disrespectful or even dangerous. Penn went to jail four times for his beliefs.

Founder of Pennsylvania

Like others before them, the Quakers decided to look for religious freedom in North America. In 1681 King Charles II gave Penn the right to build a colony there. The colony's name, Pennsylvania, combined Penn's family name with a Latin word for woodland.



William Penn signed a peace treaty with the Lenni Lenape people soon after he founded the colony of Pennsylvania.

© Photos.com/Getty Images



William Penn was given a beaded wampum belt as a gift from the Lenni Lenape people in 1682. It is now in the National Museum of the American Indian.

National Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York

Penn wanted Pennsylvania to be a “holy experiment” in tolerance. This meant that the colony welcomed all Christians, not just Quakers. In addition, Penn prepared a constitution, or document of government, for the colony. The constitution provided for an assembly of elected representatives.

Penn arrived in his colony in 1682. The new city of Philadelphia was already laid out. Penn signed treaties of friendship with the region’s Native Americans, the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) people. In 1684 Penn had to return to England. He went back to the colony in 1699 but left again in 1701. Money problems and bad health kept Penn from ever returning to Pennsylvania. He died in Buckinghamshire, England, on July 30, 1718.

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The Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England; May 19, 1643

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The Articles of Confederation of the United Colonies of New England; May 19, 1643

The Articles of Confederation between the Plantations under the Government of the Massachusetts, the Plantations under the Government of New Plymouth, the Plantations under the Government of Connecticut, and the Government of New Haven with the Plantations in Combination therewith:

Whereas we all came into these parts of America with one and the same end and aim, namely, to advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity with peace; and whereas in our settling (by a wise providence of God) we are further dispersed upon the sea coasts and rivers than was at first intended, so that we can not according to our desire with convenience communicate in one government and jurisdiction; and whereas we live encompassed with people of several nations and strange languages which hereafter may prove injurious to us or our posterity. And forasmuch as the natives have formerly committed sundry Insolence and outrages upon several Plantations of the English and have of late combined themselves against us: and seeing by reason of those sad distractions in England which they have heard of, and by which they know we are hindered from that humble way of seeking advice, or reaping those comfortable fruits of protection, which at other times we might well expect. We therefore do conceive it our bounder duty, without delay to enter into a present Consociation amongst ourselves, for mutual help and strength in all our future concernments: That, as in nation and religion, so in other respects, we be and continue one according to the tenor and true meaning of the ensuing articles: Wherefore it is fully agreed and concluded by and between the parties or Jurisdictions above named, and they jointly and severally do by these presents agree and conclude that they all be and henceforth be called by the name of the United Colonies of New England.

2. The said United Colonies for themselves and their posterities do jointly and severally hereby enter into a firm and perpetual league of friendship and amity for offence and defence, mutual advice and succor upon all just occasions both for preserving and propagating the truth and liberties of the Gospel and for their own mutual safety and welfare.

3. It is further agreed that the Plantations which at present are or hereafter shall be settled within the limits of the Massachusetts shall be forever under the Massachusetts and shall have peculiar jurisdiction among themselves in all cases as an entire body, and that Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven shall each of them have like peculiar jurisdiction and government within their limits; and in reference to the Plantations which already are settled, or shall hereafter be erected, or shall settle within their limits respectively; provided no other Jurisdiction shall hereafter be taken in as a distinct head or member of this Confederation, nor shall any other Plantation or Jurisdiction in present being, and not already in combination or under the jurisdiction of any of

these Confederates, be received by any of them; nor shall any two of the Confederates join in one Jurisdiction without consent of the rest, which consent to be interpreted as is expressed in the sixth article ensuing.

4. It is by these Confederates agreed that the charge of all just wars, whether offensive or defensive, upon what part or member of this Confederation soever they fall, shall both in men, provisions and all other disbursements be borne by all the parts of this Confederation in different proportions according to their different ability in manner following, namely, that the Commissioners for each Jurisdiction from time to time, as there shall be occasion, bring a true account and number of all their males in every Plantation, or any way belonging to or under their several Jurisdictions, of what quality or condition soever they be, from sixteen years old to threescore, being inhabitants there. And that according to the different numbers which from time to time shall be found in each Jurisdiction upon a true and just account, the service of men and all charges of the war be borne by the poll: each Jurisdiction or Plantation being left to their own just course and custom of rating themselves and people according to their different estates with due respects to their qualities and exemptions amongst themselves though the Confederation take no notice of any such privilege: and that according to their different charge of each Jurisdiction and Plantation the whole advantage of the war (if it please God so to bless their endeavors) whether it be in lands, goods, or persons, shall be proportionately divided among the said Confederates.

5. It is further agreed, that if any of these Jurisdictions or any Plantation under or in combination with them, be invaded by any enemy whomsoever, upon notice and request of any three magistrates of that Jurisdiction so invaded, the rest of the Confederates without any further meeting or expostulation shall forthwith send aid to the Confederate in danger but in different proportions; namely, the Massachusetts an hundred men sufficiently armed and provided for such a service and journey, and each of the rest, forty-five so armed and provided, or any less number, if less be required according to this proportion. But if such Confederate in danger may be supplied by their next Confederates, not exceeding the number hereby agreed, they may crave help there, and seek no further for the present: the charge to be borne as in this article is expressed: and at the return to be victualled and supplied with powder and shot for their journey (if there be need) by that Jurisdiction which employed or sent for them; but none of the Jurisdictions to exceed these numbers until by a meeting of the Commissioners for this Confederation a greater aid appear necessary. And this proportion to continue till upon knowledge of greater numbers in each Jurisdiction which shall be brought to the next meeting, some other proportion be ordered. But in any such case of sending men for present aid, whether before or after such order or alteration, it is agreed that at the meeting of the Commissioners for this Confederation, the cause of such war or invasion be duly considered: and if it appear that the fault lay in the parties so invaded then that Jurisdiction or Plantation make just satisfaction, both to the invaders whom they have injured, and bear all the charges of the war themselves, without requiring any allowance from the rest of the Confederates towards the same. And further that if any Jurisdiction see any danger of invasion approaching, and there be time for a meeting, that in such a case three magistrates of the Jurisdiction may summon a meeting at such convenient place as themselves shall think meet, to consider and provide against the threatened danger; provided when they are met they may remove to what place they please; only whilst any of these four Confederates have but three magistrates in their Jurisdiction, their requests, or summons, from any two of them shall be accounted of equal force with the three mentioned in both the clauses of this article, till there be an increase of magistrates there.

6. It is also agreed, that for the managing and concluding of all Stairs and concerning the whole Confederation two Commissioners shall be chosen by and out of each of these four Jurisdictions: namely, two for the Massachusetts, two for Plymouth, two for Connecticut, and two for New Haven, being all in Church-fellowship with us, which shall bring full power from their several General Courts respectively to hear, examine, weigh, and determine all affairs of our war, or peace, leagues, aids, charges, and numbers of men for war, division of spoils and whatsoever is gotten by conquest, receiving of more Confederates for Plantations into combination with any

of the Confederates, and all things of like nature, which are the proper concomitants or consequents of such a Confederation for amity, offense, and defence: not intermeddling with the government of any of the Jurisdictions, which by the third article is preserved entirely to themselves. But if these eight Commissioners when they meet shall not all agree yet it [is] concluded that any six of the eight agreeing shall have power to settle and determine the business in question. But if six do not agree, that then such propositions with their reasons so far as they have been debated, be sent and referred to the four General Courts; namely, the Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven; and if at all the said General Courts the business so referred be concluded, then to be prosecuted by the Confederates and all their members. It is further agreed that these eight Commissioners shall meet once every year besides extraordinary meetings (according to the fifth article) to consider, treat, and conclude of all affairs belonging to this Confederation, which meeting shall ever be the first Thursday in September. And that the next meeting after the date of these presents, which shall be accounted the second meeting, shall be at Boston in the Massachusetts, the third at Hartford, the fourth at New Haven, the fifth at Plymouth, the sixth and seventh at Boston; and then Hartford, New Haven, and Plymouth, and so in course successively, if in the meantime some middle place be not found out and agreed on, which may be commodious for all the Jurisdictions.

7. It is further agreed that at each meeting of these eight Commissioners, whether ordinary or extraordinary, they or six of them agreeing as before, may choose their President out of themselves whose office work shall be to take care and direct for order and a comely carrying on of all proceedings in the present meeting: but he shall be invested with no such power or respect, as by which he shall hinder the propounding or progress of any business, or any way cast the scales otherwise than in the precedent article is agreed.

8. It is also agreed that the Commissioners for this Confederation hereafter at their meetings, whether ordinary or extraordinary, as they may have commission or opportunity, do endeavor to frame and establish agreements and orders in general cases of a civil nature, wherein all the Plantations are interested, for preserving of peace among themselves, for preventing as much as may be all occasion of war or differences with others, as about the free and speedy passage of justice in every Jurisdiction, to all the Confederates equally as to their own, receiving those that remove from one Plantation to another without due certificate, how all the Jurisdictions may carry it towards the Indians, that they neither grow insolent nor be injured without due satisfaction, lest war break in upon the Confederates through such miscarriages. It is also agreed that if any servant run away from his master into any other of these confederated Jurisdictions, that in such case, upon the certificate of one magistrate in the Jurisdiction out of which the said servant fled, or upon other due proof; the said servant shall be delivered, either to his master, or any other that pursues and brings such certificate or proof. And that upon the escape of any prisoner whatsoever, or fugitive for any criminal cause, whether breaking prison, or getting from the officer, or otherwise escaping, upon the certificate of two magistrates of the Jurisdiction out of which the escape is made, that he was a prisoner, or such an offender at the time of the escape, the magistrates, or some of them of that Jurisdiction where for the present the said prisoner or fugitive abideth, shall forthwith grant such a warrant as the case will bear, for the apprehending of any such person, and the delivery of him into the hands of the officer or other person who pursues him. And if there be help required, for the safe returning of any such offender, then it shall be granted to him that craves the same, he paying the charges thereof.

9. And for that the justest wars may be of dangerous consequence, especially to the smaller Plantations in these United Colonies, it is agreed that neither the Massachusetts, Plymouth, Connecticut, nor New Haven, nor any of the members of them, shall at any time hereafter begin, undertake, or engage themselves, or this Confederation, or any part thereof in any war whatsoever (sudden exigencies, with the necessary consequents thereof excepted), which are also to be moderated as much as the case will permit, without the consent and agreement of the forementioned eight Commissioners, or at least six of them, as in the sixth article is provided: and that no charge be required of any of the Confederates, in case of a defensive war, till the said

Commissioners have met, and approved the justice of the war, and have agreed upon the sum of money to be levied, which sum is then to be paid by the several Confederates in proportion according to the fourth article

10. That in extraordinary occasions, when meetings are summoned by three magistrates of any Jurisdiction, or two as in the fifth article, ii) any of the Commissioners come not, due warning being given or sent, it is agreed that four of the Commissioners shall have power to direct a war which cannot be delayed, and to send for due proportions of men out of each Jurisdiction, as well as six might do if all met; but not less than six shall determine the justice of the war, or allow the demands or bills of charges, or cause any levies to be made for the same.

11. It is further agreed that if any of the Confederates shall hereafter break any of these present articles, or be any other ways injurious to any one of the other Jurisdictions; such breach of agreement or injury shall be duly considered and ordered by the Commissioners for the other Jurisdictions, that both peace and this present Confederation may be entirely preserved without violation.

12. Lastly, this perpetual Confederation, and the several articles and agreements thereof being read and seriously considered, both by the General Court for the Massachusetts, and by the Commissioners for Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven, were fully allowed and confirmed by three of the forenamed Confederates, namely, the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven; only the Commissioners for Plymouth having no commission to concludes desired respite until they might advise with their General Court; whereupon it was agreed and concluded by the said Court of the Massachusetts, and the Commissioners for the other two Confederates, that, if Plymouth consent, then the whole treaty as it stands in these present articles is, and shall continue, firm and stable without alteration: but if Plymouth come not in yet the other three Confederates do by these presents confirm the whole Confederation, and all the articles thereof; only in September next when the second meeting of the Commissioners is to be at Boston, new consideration may be taken of the sixth article, which concerns number of Commissioners for meeting and concluding the affairs of this Confederation to the satisfaction of the Court of the Massachusetts, and the Commissioners for the other two Confederates, but the rest to stand unquestioned.

In testimony whereof, the General Court of the Massachusetts by their Secretary, and the Commissioners for Connecticut and New Haven, have subscribed these present articles of this nineteenth of the third month, commonly called May, Anno Domini 1643.

At a meeting of the Commissioners for the Confederation held at Boston the 7th of September, it appearing that the General Court of New Plymouth and the several townships thereof have read, considered, and approved these Articles of Confederation, as appeareth by commission of their General Court bearing date the 29th of August, 1643, to Mr. Edward Winslow and Mr. William Collier to ratify and confirm the same on their behalf: we therefore, the Commissioners for the Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Haven, do also from our several Governments subscribe unto them.

Source:

The Federal and State Constitutions Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America
Compiled and Edited Under the Act of Congress of June 30, 1906 by Francis Newton Thorpe
Washington, DC : Government Printing Office, 1909.

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13 colonies: surrender of New Amsterdam



In 1664, England took over New Amsterdam (now part of New York City) from the Netherlands without firing a shot.

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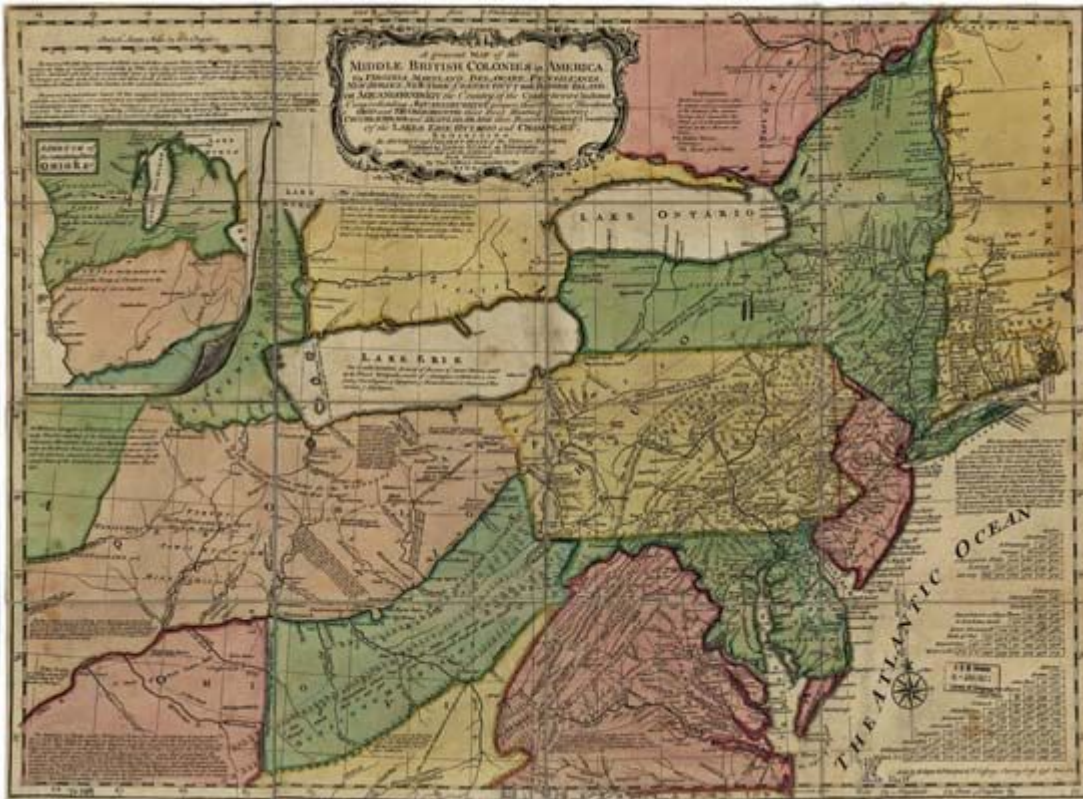
Citation (MLA style):

13 colonies: surrender of New Amsterdam. Image. Britannica LaunchPacks: The Thirteen Colonies, Encyclopædia Britannica, 23 Mar. 2025. packs.eb.com. Accessed 3 May. 2025.

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13 colonies: map



A map from 1758 shows some of the 13 colonies, as well as Native American tribal lands.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (G3710 Ar071300)

Citation (MLA style):

13 colonies: map. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: The Thirteen Colonies*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 23 Mar. 2025. packs.eb.com. Accessed 3 May. 2025.

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13 colonies: Pennsylvania



The painting *The Birth of Pennsylvania 1680* depicts William Penn meeting with King Charles II about the future colony of Pennsylvania.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (cph 3g07157)

Citation (MLA style):

13 colonies: Pennsylvania. Image. *Britannica LaunchPacks: The Thirteen Colonies*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 23 Mar. 2025. packs.eb.com. Accessed 3 May. 2025.

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Plymouth Rock



An old drawing shows the artist's idea of what the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock looked like.

Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Citation (MLA style):

Plymouth Rock. Image. Britannica LaunchPacks: The Thirteen Colonies, Encyclopædia Britannica, 23 Mar. 2025. packs.eb.com. Accessed 3 May. 2025.

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