

Information on the Colony of Massachusetts

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

Founder

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

Reasons for Being Founded

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

People in the Colony

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

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

Climate and Geography

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

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

Economy

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

Religion

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

Politics and Government

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

Information on the Colony of Rhode Island

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Founder

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

Reasons for Being Founded

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

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

People in the Colony

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

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

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



Climate and Geography

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

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

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

Economy

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

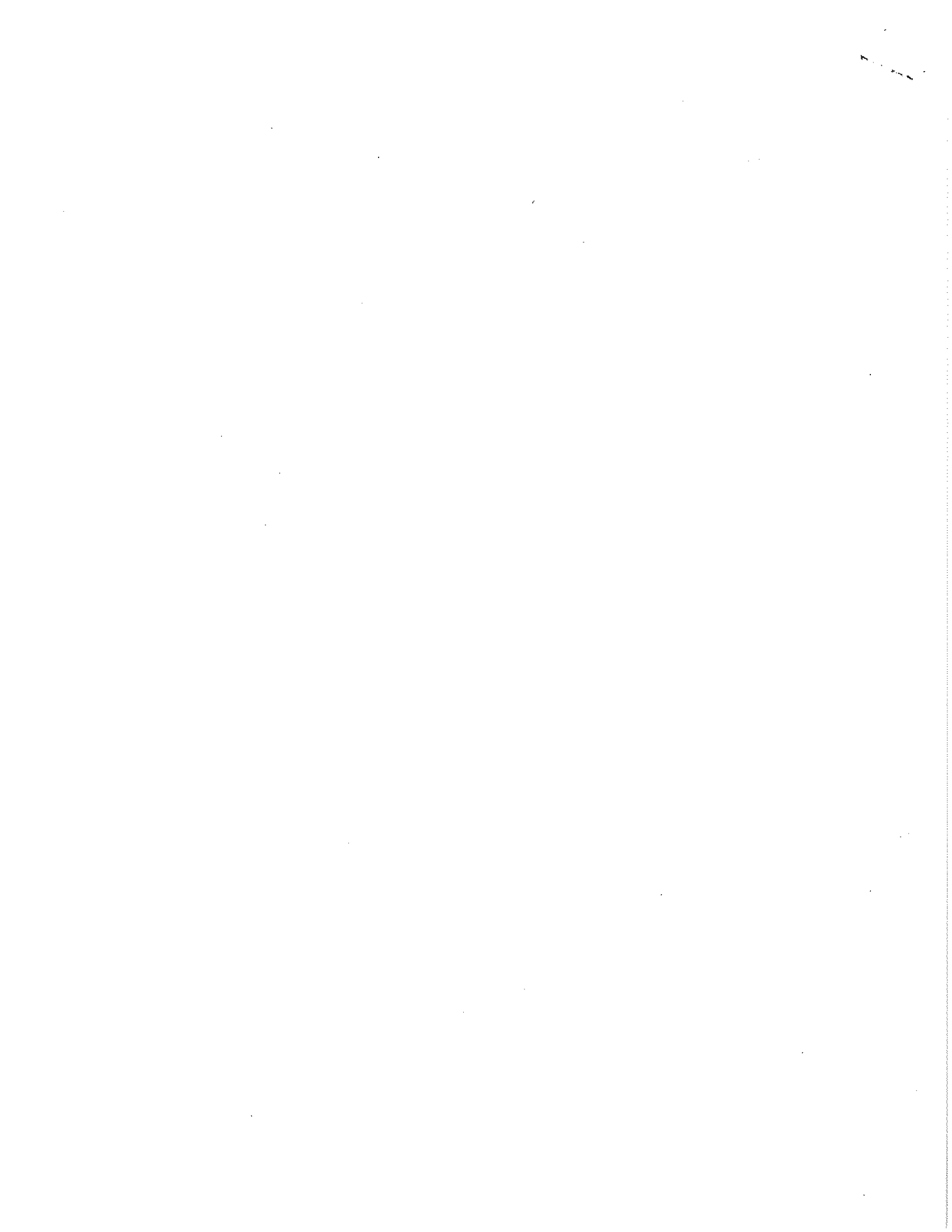
Any business related to shipping was big business for Rhode Island. Shipbuilders constructed large ships built to cross the Atlantic with goods needed by England (such as rum, sugar, wool, and beef) and return with manufactured goods needed by the colonists. The colony was also a haven for pirates and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

Religion

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

Politics and Government

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



Information on the Colony of Connecticut

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Founder

The area later called Connecticut was claimed by Dutch explorer Adrian Block in 1614 and by an Englishman from Massachusetts, John Oldham, in 1633. England “won” the argument, which cleared the way for settlement by English colonists escaping religious persecution in Massachusetts. Thomas Hooker, a Puritan minister, led his congregation to Connecticut in June of 1636, and is generally considered the founder.

Reasons for Being Founded

Thomas Hooker had come to Massachusetts, a colony built on Puritan principles, because he was not allowed to practice his Puritan faith in his native England. But he was disturbed by the lack of democracy in Massachusetts, and left the colony for Connecticut to find even greater religious freedom.

People in the Colony

Native Americans lived near the Quinnequktuqut (“beside the long tidal river”) River when some white Europeans came to North America. In 1631 some Native Americans invited the Massachusetts Colony’s governor to settle in their area. In exchange, they asked for English protection in their fights with other Native American tribes. Instead, they were often at war with the colonists and forced into slavery.

Dutch and Swedish settlers also lived in Connecticut, as their governments also had claims on the area. African slaves and indentured servants were brought into the colony by their white “owners.”

Climate and Geography

The winters in Connecticut were much colder than English winters, and summers were mild.

The terrain was hilly and covered with forests. The soil was suitable for farming, though most farms were small. Colonists along the coast used the sea to make a living, through fishing, whaling, and trading.

Economy

Colonists grew the food they needed for their families plus a little more to trade. Common crops were corn, pumpkins, beans, squash, and apples. Cattle were raised for beef and milk. Colonists hunted for game, did their own weaving and built their own homes with logs from the forests around them.

Shipbuilding, fishing, and whaling along the coast were other ways to make a living in Connecticut.

Religion

Since most colonists came to Connecticut from Puritan communities, they followed the Puritan religion. But these colonists made sure to separate their religious codes from their colonial laws more completely than colonists in Massachusetts.

Politics and Government

Connecticut's colonists had the world's first written constitution, called the Fundamental Orders. It called for a government "based on the consent of the governed," which was a radical idea for the time. One representative from each town, six magistrates, and one Governor were all elected by the free white men of the colony.