

Information on the Colony of Virginia

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

Sir Walter Raleigh, an English explorer and adventurer, came up with the idea of sending an expedition to Virginia in the late 1500's. He named the colony after his friend and benefactor, Queen Elizabeth I of England, who was called the Virgin Queen because she was not married.

The first expedition in 1584 disappeared, and it was assumed that they had been kidnapped or killed by the Native Americans living in the area. But other expeditions survived and Virginia was made a colony in 1607.

Reasons for Being Founded

Raleigh saw the colony as an investment, a way to earn money by trading the raw materials to be found there. Settlers would be sent to set up farms in Virginia, then sell what they produced and trade for what they needed through the Virginia Company of London, the company set up by the investors who would own Virginia. This way, the Virginia Company could make money by setting prices.

People in the Colony

In this, the first English colony in North America, most settlers were English. Men were given 50 acres each, plus an additional 100 acres if they bought stock in the Virginia Company. Many of these settlers brought their white indentured servants and also held black slaves.

In addition, people skilled in various trades (shoemakers, brickmakers, tailors, etc.) came to provide their talents to the settlers, and unskilled laborers came to escape unemployment in England while providing cheap labor to the plantation owners.

Climate and Geography

Virginia had mild winters and hot, humid summers. The rain and fertile soil made the colony an excellent place to farm.

The Atlantic coast region of Virginia had low, fertile lands suitable for large plantations, and quiet bays where ports could be established to handle the shipping of raw materials from the colony. In the far western reaches of the colony, wooded mountains were hard to clear for farms, and farms here were small and self-sufficient.

Economy

Virginia settlers found that tobacco grew best and brought the best price, so huge plantations were given over to the production of tobacco. These settlers introduced the slave trade in 1619 in order to provide a source of cheap labor for their plantations. This slave trade and the shipping of crops and slaves were lucrative businesses for the colonists.

Religion

The official state-established Church of England was also the official religion of the colony of Virginia. The rules of the religion often affected the laws of the colony; for example, all colonists were required to attend church twice each Sunday.

Politics and Government

Free, white, landowning men elected their representatives to the House of Burgesses, which had 22 members. The Virginia Company appointed six members to the Governor's Council. Over both of these legislative bodies was the Governor, appointed in England and sent to represent the King or Queen.

Virginia colonists had a reputation for self-government and did not need to pay taxes, since the Governor and other appointed leaders were fully supported by the large amounts of public lands set aside for them.

Information on the Colony of Maryland

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Founder

Captain John Smith claimed the area around the Chesapeake Bay for England in 1608. King Charles I of England gave the land to his friend, Lord George Calvert, who acted as Lord Proprietor. Calvert was required to pay two Native American arrows a year and half of any gold or silver discovered there. Little gold or silver was ever discovered, so Calvert was free to run the colony as he wished at a small price.

Reasons for Being Founded

A Lord Proprietor often ran the colony from England as a business, but Lord Calvert had other ideas in mind. He had recently been converted to Catholicism and wanted a haven from religious persecution. He thought Maryland would be a “Land of Sanctuary” for those people seeking religious or political freedom.

People in the Colony

Most settlers were Catholics, but many persecuted Protestants from England also came to live in Maryland: Quakers, Baptists, Puritans, and Wesleyans

Each male settler was granted 100 acres; in addition, he received an extra 100 acres for his wife and any children over the age of 16. Each child under 16 earned the father an extra 50 acres. Indentured servants were given 50 acres once they earned their freedom.

Many Native Americans lived in the area and Maryland law forbade forcing them into slavery. Some African slaves were in the colony, but not large numbers.

Climate and Geography

Maryland was on both sides of Chesapeake Bay, the largest bay in the United States. The surrounding land was low and fertile, since it was covered with silt from the bay.

The winters in Maryland could be cold, with lots of rain and some snow. Summers were hot and humid.

Economy

Colonists supported themselves on farms where they raised flax (to make cloth), grains such as corn and wheat, vegetables, tobacco, and fruit trees. They were also involved in the lumber business, shipping, fishing, and raising cattle for beef and milk. Some colonists mined for iron that could be exported to England and manufactured into finished goods.

Religion

Most colonists were Catholic, but Maryland granted religious freedom to all its inhabitants. There were many settlers from many religions.

Politics and Government

Maryland was mostly independent of England, and colonists were allowed to govern themselves. The original charter from Charles I granted Lord Calvert, the Lord Proprietor, more power than most colonial leaders. Free men elected representatives to govern the colony and owed their loyalty to Calvert, not to the King. Calvert had the power to print money, create an army, and declare war.

Information on the Colony of South Carolina

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Founders

Eight Lords Proprietors (friends of King Charles II who had helped him become king after his father had lost his position during the English Civil War) founded South Carolina in 1690. They were: Earl of Clarendon, Duke of Albemarle, William Lord Craven John, Baron Berkeley of Stratton, Sir George Carteret, Sir John Colleton, Sir William Berkeley, and Anthony Ashley Cooper.

Reasons for Being Founded

The eight Lords Proprietors were given this grant of land (called Carolina) by King Charles as a gift to thank them for their support. The Lords Proprietors considered it an investment, a way to earn money. Settlers would pay their own way over to the colony, then sell what they produced and trade for what they needed ONLY through businesses owned by the Lords. As middlemen, the Lords could make money.

People in the Colony

When the first white settlers arrived from England, they found about 30 tribes of Native Americans already living in the area. Until the African slave trade became more common, Native Americans were often forced into slavery.

Settlers were usually white Europeans who were fleeing religious persecution in their homelands: French Huguenots (Protestants), Quakers from England, and Jews from all over Europe. These settlers often brought along their indentured servants (usually white Europeans) and African slaves. The Lords promised 150 acres of land to every freeman who came to South Carolina, plus 150 acres for every indentured servant he brought along. Bringing a woman or boy gave the freeman 100 more acres.

Climate and Geography

The winters were shorter and milder than the harsh English winters. Summers were long, humid, and hot, with a long growing season for crops.

Off the coast were many picturesque sea islands that were often too isolated to be settled. The coastal plains were low and swampy, and settlers often became sick from malaria caught from the mosquitoes that bred there. Native Americans taught the settlers about roots that could be made into a tea that the Europeans called “sassafras.” This tea relieved many of the

symptoms of malaria. But this area was good for growing rice, and many settlers started large rice plantations along the coast. Inland, the soil was a red clay. There farmers planted cotton. The far western part of the colony was covered with wooded mountains. The weather was cooler and the land more rugged. Some settlers started smaller, self-sufficient farms instead of large plantations.

Economy

Most settlers were farmers, growing cotton, tobacco, indigo, and rice. These cash crops were usually grown on large plantations, using slave labor. The slave trade and the shipping of crops and slaves were also lucrative businesses during this time.

Farmers on small farms grew the food they needed plus a little extra to trade for other goods. They also hunted for deer and cut down lumber for building.

Native Americans lived by hunting and gathering. They bartered with the food and animal skins they acquired.

Some craftsmen came to the colony to set up businesses. South Carolina was known for its silversmiths and furniture makers.

Religion

South Carolina was unique for its religious liberty. John Locke, a famous political philosopher of the time, wrote the charter for the colony, which said that “seven or more persons agreeing to any religion shall constitute a church” and that “no person shall use any . . . abusive language against the religion of any church. . . . No person shall disturb . . . or persecute another for his . . . religion or way of worship.” Compared to the religious persecution many settlers had experienced in their homelands, this was great freedom.

Politics and Government

The colony was ruled by a system of laws written by John Locke at the request of the Lords Proprietors. It was called the Fundamental Constitution of Carolina. Real governing power was retained by the government in England, so South Carolina was really a province, not a colony. Over time, the colonists were able to secure some local control over their government: they elected five representatives to serve with five agents representing the Lords on a Council. This council was ruled by a Parliament and the Lords Proprietors.

Information on the Colony of Georgia

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Founder

George II founded Georgia in his own name in 1732, later granting the business rights of running the colony to eight Lords Proprietors and even later to 21 Trustees. They gave the job of setting up the colony to James Edward Ogelthorpe, an idealistic political activist of his time, who was famous for having headed up a committee on prison reform.

Reasons for Being Founded

Many European nations had competing claims for land in North America: both England and Spain claimed the land that became Georgia. George II saw settling the colony as a way to wrest the colony away from Spain (which did not yet have widespread permanent settlements in the area).

James Ogelthorpe, however, had a vision of making Georgia a place of refuge for the poor debtors he had seen during his committee work on English prisons. If a man owed money and could not pay it back, he was thrown into prison, which was a horrible place. While he was imprisoned, he could not earn money to pay back his debts and gain his freedom. Ogelthorpe imagined sending the “industrious yet unfortunate poor” to Georgia, where they could work to settle the wilderness and earn money for the Trustees in order to pay back their debts.

People in the Colony

When the first white settlers arrived, they found Native Americans already living in the area. Until the African slave trade became more common, Native Americans were often forced into slavery.

Settlers were debtors from English prisons and white Europeans from many countries (France, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Germany, the Netherlands, and what is now Switzerland and Austria) who were seeking religious freedom and cheap land. Some settlers were missionaries who tried to convert the Native Americans to Christianity. Some settlers brought their white indentured servants, and by 1751 African slaves were imported to provide cheap labor.

Climate and Geography

The winters were shorter and milder than the harsh English winters and the summers were long, hot, and humid. The settlers were bothered by the violent thunderstorms that blew in from the Atlantic Ocean, the variable daily temperatures and the gnats, fleas, and lice that plagued them in the summer.

Along the coast were fertile swamps where plantations grew rice and indigo, a plant used to make blue dye. Inland, cotton and tobacco were grown on the fertile, red-clay plains. The far western part of the colony, called the “backcountry,” was mountainous and forested. The weather was cooler and the land more rugged. Here farmers started self-sufficient farms instead of large plantations.

Economy

In Georgia, most settlers were farmers, growing cotton, indigo, tobacco, and rice. These cash crops were usually grown on large plantations using slave labor. Though slave labor had originally been outlawed in the colony, it was later introduced in order to make Georgian farm products more competitive in price with the farm products of other, slave-owning, colonies.

Other settlers made their living by farming their own small farms, trading with Native Americans, or working in various trades—as shoemakers, brickmakers, tailors, blacksmiths, silversmiths, and pottery makers.

Religion

In addition to providing a place for debtors from English prisons, Ogelthorpe envisioned Georgia as a place where “foreigners persecuted for conscience’s sake” could find a safe place to live. Many settlers came to Georgia to escape religious persecution, so the colony had a tradition of religious freedom.

Politics and Government

Georgian landowners (free, white men) elected representatives from among themselves to the Common House of Assembly. These lawmakers were watched over by the Upper House of General Assembly, whose members were appointed by the Trustees. Above the two legislative bodies was a Governor, appointed by the Trustees and the King in England. The Governor had the final word, since he represented the colony’s “owners” who looked upon Georgia as a business investment.