

15 The Middle Colonies



Different Colonies You still have four colonies to learn about—the middle colonies. These were New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Pennsylvania. Find these colonies on the map of “The Thirteen Colonies.”

Getting Along Together

Both the southern colonies and the New England colonies attracted mostly colonists from England and Scotland. But many people from different parts of Europe came to the middle colonies. Many settlers came from Germany, the Netherlands (also called Holland), and Sweden.

Some of these settlers came for religious freedom. Some came to trade with Native Americans for furs. Others looked for farmland to grow crops.

Not all the people who came to the middle colonies spoke the same language. They had different religions and customs.

To get along together, the people had to be tolerant of one another's differences. To be tolerant is to respect other people,

especially people who have different religions, cultures, and languages.

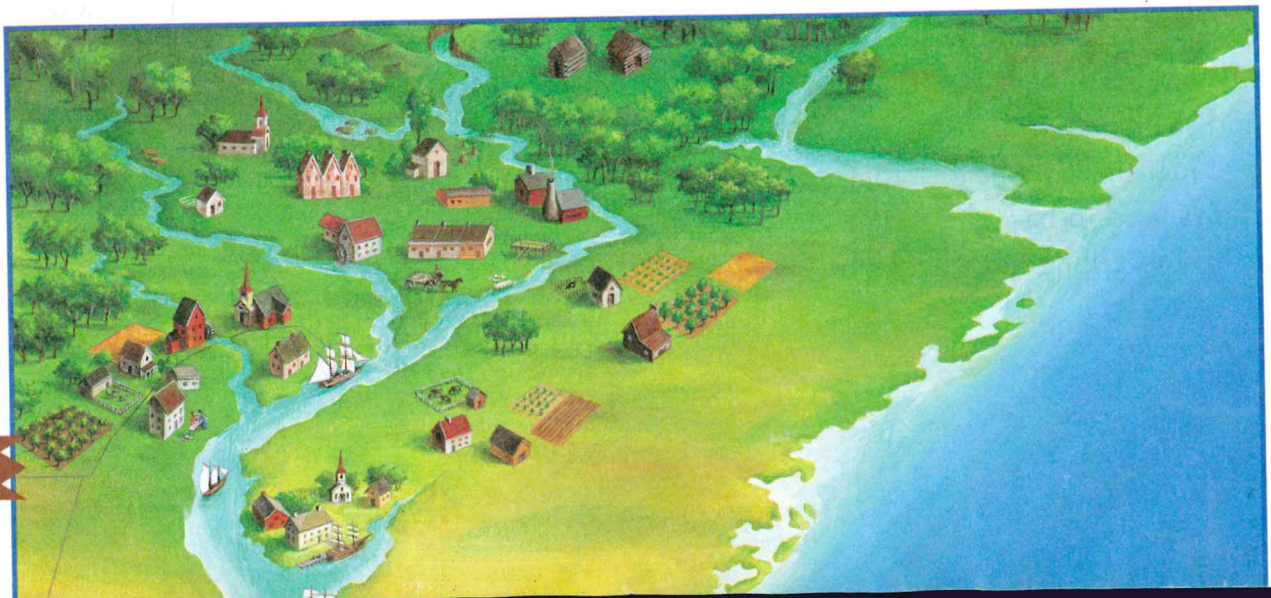
A Mixing of Cultures

The settlers from the different countries could do certain things very well. The Germans were skilled farmers. The Dutch were very good at building wagons and plows. The Swedes could build strong log houses.

The settlers taught these skills to other settlers. Sometimes the settlers learned each other's way of having fun. For example, the Dutch taught the other colonists ice-skating and bowling.

Sharing among different groups is called a mixing of cultures. The mixing of cultures helped the middle colonies grow and prosper.

Rich farmland and small towns were part of the landscape of the middle colonies.



Farming in the Middle Colonies

Like the New England colonies, the middle colonies had forests for lumbering and shipbuilding.

Unlike the New England colonies, the middle colonies were a very good place to farm. The soil was rich, and the climate was usually mild. Summers were warm and rainy. Many kinds of crops grew well there.

The early settlers grew many different kinds of fruits and vegetables. These grew so well that farmers could feed their families and have enough left over to sell to others.

Soon farmers grew some crops just to sell. The main cash crops in the middle colonies were grains such as wheat, rye, and oats. Because the middle colonies grew large amounts of grains, they were called “the bread colonies.”

“River Highways”

How do you think colonial grain farmers sold their cash crops? Here is just one example. After the farmers harvested the wheat, they took it to a miller. The miller, who owned a mill, ground the wheat into flour.

Now the farmers were ready to sell their flour in markets in the big port cities of Philadelphia and New York. But how could they get the flour to a big city?

Look at the map again. Find the Delaware and the Hudson rivers.

Do you see how these rivers flow through large parts of New York and Pennsylvania? Both the Delaware and Hudson rivers are wide and deep enough for ships to travel almost 100 miles upstream.

Farmers in Pennsylvania used the Delaware River as a “highway” to move crops from their farms to Philadelphia. They used the Hudson River to move crops to markets in New York City.

When the farmers got to Philadelphia or New York City, they sold their flour and other crops to **merchants**. The merchants shipped what they had bought either to the other colonies or to England and other European countries.

Important Cities

New York and Philadelphia became centers for trade and shipping. They also became centers for the mixing of cultures. People with unusual skills and new ideas came to these port cities. There they started schools, built libraries, and printed newspapers.

Settlers in the middle colonies learned from one another. They began a new culture from this mixing of cultures. Later the new culture would be known as the American culture.

vocabulary
merchant someone who makes a living by buying and selling large quantities of goods

