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The Middle Colonies: Farms and Cities

MAIN IDEA

The people who settled in the Middle Colonies made a society of great diversity.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

States in this region still boast some of the most diverse communities in the world.

TERMS & NAMES

cash crop
gristmill
diversity

artisan
Conestoga wagon

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

Elizabeth Ashbridge was only 19 years old when she arrived in America from England in the 1730s. Although she was an indentured servant, she hoped to earn her freedom and find a way to express her strong religious feelings.

After several years, Elizabeth did gain freedom. In Pennsylvania, she joined a religious group called the Society of Friends, or Quakers. The new Quaker longed to share her beliefs openly.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

I was permitted to see that all I had gone through was to prepare me for this day; and that the time was near, when it would be required of me, to go and declare to others what the God of mercy had done for my soul.

Elizabeth Ashbridge, Some Account . . . of the Life of Elizabeth Ashbridge

The Quakers believed that people of different beliefs could live together in harmony. They helped to create a climate of tolerance and acceptance in the Middle Colonies of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, as you will read in this section.



A woman speaks out at a Quaker meeting. The Society of Friends allowed women a more active role than other religions.



Taking Notes

Use your chart to take notes about the middle colonies.

	NEW ENGLAND COLONIES	MIDDLE COLONIES
CAUSES		
Climate		
Resources		
People		
EFFECT		
Economic Development		

A Wealth of Resources

The Middle Colonies had much to offer in addition to a climate of tolerance. A Frenchman named Michel Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur (krehv•KUR) praised the region's "fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields . . . decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges, where an hundred years ago all was wild, woody, and uncultivated."

The prosperity that Crèvecoeur described was typical of the Middle Colonies. Immigrants from all over Europe came to take advantage of this region's productive land. Their settlements soon crowded out Native Americans, who had lived in the region for thousands of years.

Among the immigrants who came to the Middle Colonies were Dutch and German farmers. They brought the advanced agricultural methods of their countries with them. Their skills, knowledge, and hard work would soon result in an abundance of foods.

The Middle Colonies boasted a longer growing season than New England and a soil rich enough to grow **cash crops**. These were crops raised to be sold for money. Common cash crops included fruits, vegetables, and, above all, grain. The Middle Colonies produced so much grain that people began calling them the “breadbasket” colonies.

The Importance of Mills

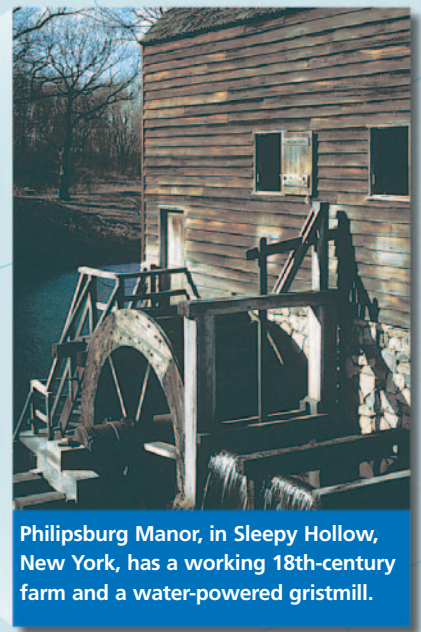
After harvesting their crops of corn, wheat, rye, or other grains, farmers took them to a **gristmill**. There, millers crushed the grain between heavy stones to produce flour or meal. Human or animal power fueled some of these mills. But water wheels built along the region’s plentiful rivers powered most of the mills.

The bread that colonists baked with these products was crucial to their diet. Colonists ate about a pound of grain in some form each day—nearly three times more than Americans eat today. Even though colonists ate a great deal of grain, they had plenty left over to send to the region’s coastal markets for sale.

Vocabulary

grist: another name for grain, the one-seeded fruit of cereal grasses like wheat and rye

The Middle Colonies, 1750



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Maps

- Place** What are the three major rivers in the Middle Colonies?
- Movement** Why might the Middle Colonies’ rivers that empty into the ocean be important for farmers?

The Cities Prosper

The excellent harbors along the coasts of the Middle Colonies were ideal sites for cities. New York City grew up at the mouth of the Hudson River, and Philadelphia was founded on the Delaware River. The merchants who lived in these growing port cities exported cash crops, especially grain, and imported manufactured goods.

Because of its enormous trade, Philadelphia was the fastest growing city in the colonies. The city owed its expansion to a thriving trade in wheat and other cash crops. By 1720, it was home to a dozen large shipyards—places where ships are built or repaired.

The city's wealth also brought many public improvements. Large and graceful buildings, such as Philadelphia's statehouse—which was later renamed Independence Hall—graced the city's streets. Streetlights showed the way along paved roads. In 1748, a Swedish visitor named Peter Kalm exclaimed that Philadelphia had grown up overnight.

ReadingHistory

A. Reading a Map Locate New York and Philadelphia on the map on page 115. Note the rivers next to which they were built.

daily life

NAMES AND OCCUPATIONS

Many English colonists had names like Miller and Smith—names that reflected how their families had made a living in England. For example, a colonist named Miller probably had an ancestor who had operated a mill. Similarly, Smith probably had an ancestor who had been a blacksmith.

Sometimes colonists continued in the same occupations as their ancestors. But as time went on, colonists turned to other occupations, and their names no longer reflected how they earned a living. Yet names like Smith and Miller remain common in the United States, reflecting the country's past as English colonies.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

And yet its natural advantages, trade, riches and power, are by no means inferior to any, even of the most ancient towns in Europe.

Peter Kalm, quoted in America at 1750

New York could also thank trade for its rapid growth. This bustling port handled flour, bread, furs, and whale oil. At midcentury, an English naval officer admired the city's elegant brick houses, paved streets, and roomy warehouses. "Such is this city," he said, "that very few in England can rival it in its show."

Background

In 1742, New York City's population was about 11,000, and nearly 13,000 people lived in Philadelphia.

A Diverse Region

Many different immigrant groups arrived in the port cities of the Middle Colonies. Soon, the region's population showed a remarkable



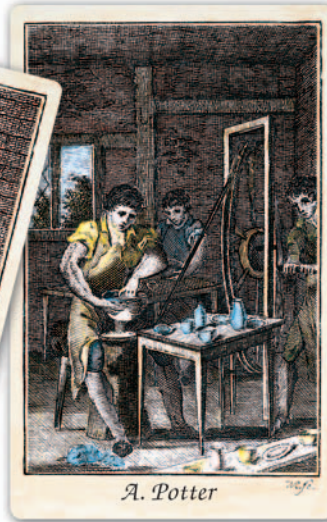
A. Cooper



A. Sawyer



A. Smith



A. Potter

diversity, or variety, in its people. One of the largest immigrant groups in the region, after the English, was the Germans.

Many of the Germans arrived between 1710 and 1740. Most came as indentured servants fleeing religious intolerance. Known for their skillful farming, these immigrants soon made a mark on the Middle Colonies. “German communities,” wrote one historian, “could be identified by the huge barns, the sleek cattle, and the stout workhorses.”

Germans also brought a strong tradition of craftsmanship to the Middle Colonies. For example, German gunsmiths first developed the long rifle. Other German **artisans**, or craftspeople, became ironworkers and makers of glass, furniture, and kitchenware.

Germans built **Conestoga wagons** to carry their produce to town. These wagons used wide wheels suitable for dirt roads, and the wagons’ curved beds prevented spilling when climbing up and down hills. The wagons’ canvas covers offered protection from rain. Conestoga wagons would later be important in settling the West.

The Middle Colonies became home to many people besides the Germans. There were also the English, Dutch, Scots-Irish, African, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Swedish, and French. Because of the diversity in the Middle Colonies, different groups had to learn to accept, or at least tolerate, one another.

A Climate of Tolerance

While the English Puritans shaped life in the New England Colonies, many different groups contributed to the culture of the Middle Colonies. Because of the greater number of different groups, it was difficult for any single group to dominate the others. Thus, the region’s diversity helped to create a climate of tolerance. Some of the region’s religious groups also helped to promote tolerance.

The Middle Colonies’ earliest settlers, the Dutch in New York and the Quakers in Pennsylvania, both practiced religious tolerance. That is, they honored the right of religious groups to follow their own beliefs without interference. Quakers also insisted on the equality of men and women. As a result, Quaker women served as preachers, and female missionaries traveled the world spreading the Quaker message.

Background

By the second half of the 1700s, more than one in three colonists in Pennsylvania claimed German ancestry.

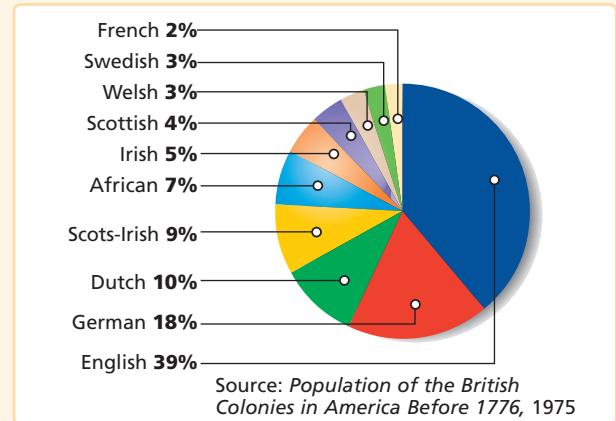
ReadingHistory

B. Summarizing

How would you describe the population of the Middle Colonies?

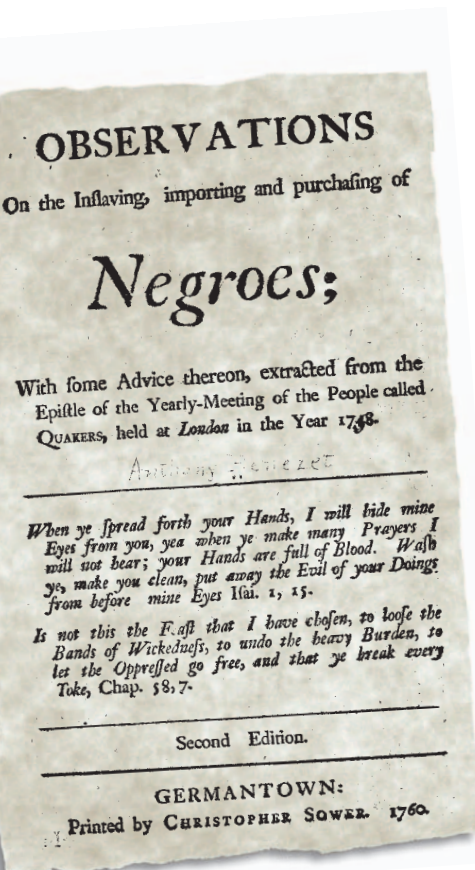
The Middle Colonies, 1750

Population Diversity



SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Graphs

1. What group made up nearly one-fifth of the population in the Middle Colonies?
2. What were the two main languages spoken in the Middle Colonies?



Most Quakers were opposed to slavery. Shown here is a Quaker antislavery pamphlet printed in the Middle Colonies.

Quakers were also the first to raise their voices against slavery. Quaker ideals influenced immigrants in the Middle Colonies—and eventually the whole nation.

African Americans in the Middle Colonies

The tolerant attitude of many settlers in the Middle Colonies did not prevent slavery in the region. In 1750, about 7 percent of the Middle Colonies' population was enslaved. As in New England, many people of African descent lived and worked in cities.

New York City had a larger number of people of African descent than any other city in the Northern colonies. In New York City, enslaved persons worked as manual laborers, servants, drivers, and as assistants to artisans and craftspeople. Free African-American men and women also made their way to the city, where they worked as laborers, servants, or sailors.

Tensions existed between the races in New York City, sometimes leading to violence. In 1712, for example, about 24 rebellious slaves set fire to a building. They then killed nine whites and wounded several others who came to put out the fire. Armed colonists caught the suspects, who were punished horribly. Such punishments showed that whites would resort to force and violence to control slaves. Even so, the use of violence did little to prevent the outbreak of other slave rebellions.

Force would also be used in the South, which had far more enslaved Africans than the North. In the next section, you will learn how the South's plantation economy came to depend on the labor of enslaved Africans.

Reading History

C. Forming Opinions Why do you think that force was needed to keep Africans enslaved?

Section 2 Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- cash crop
- gristmill
- diversity
- artisan
- Conestoga wagon

2. Using Graphics

Use a cluster diagram like the one shown to indicate where different immigrants in the Middle Colonies came from.



What was the third largest group in the region?

3. Main Ideas

- What attracted settlers to the Middle Colonies?
- What service was performed at gristmills?
- Why might enslaved Africans be able to join in rebellion more easily in the city than the country?

4. Critical Thinking

Analyzing Causes What factors allowed large coastal cities to develop in the Middle Colonies?

THINK ABOUT

- geography
- people
- trade

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

MATH GEOGRAPHY

Read more about Philadelphia. Create a **database** of the city's population growth in the 1700s or draw a **map** that shows its physical growth.