

Why the new england and chesapeake regions developed into distinct societies by 17...

[Countries](#), [England](#)



9/10/09AP US History P. 4 Today, the country of the United States of America is well known for it having the most diverse population in the world. There are people of many different religious beliefs and ethnicities. If one thinks back on it though, it is strange how such a thing could have happened. We were originally settled by one country; England. Although the colonies in the New England and Chesapeake regions of North America were settled mainly by the English, by the 1700s both developed into two distinct societies because of their environmental surroundings, their reasons for settlement, and their way of life.

The regions had somewhat similar climates, but it was their surroundings that set them apart. Both regions had harsh and unforgiving climates that neither the Chesapeake settlers nor the New England settlers were prepared for. According to a book written by Captain John Smith called the History of Virginia, he states that with the extremity of the bitter cold frost more than half of us died [Doc. F]. The first settlers of the New England colonies didn't fare too well either. Their first winter of 1620-1621 took a high death toll, leaving only 44 of the original 102 alive. That, however, is where the similarities end. The Chesapeake colonies were fortunate to have extremely fertile soil and soon their society revolved around lucrative cash crops, such as tobacco, rice, sugar, and indigo. Due to the nature of tobacco, colonies such as Virginia and other large producers of tobacco adopted the plantation system.

These plantations were many acres in size and required many workers to operate. Thus the seeds of African slavery in America began to form. In

In addition to the fertile soil the Chesapeake region had many slow moving and navigable rivers. These rivers allowed close ties to England. The New England colonies were not so lucky and due to prehistoric glaciers, had rocky and infertile soil. With the help of the local Indians, they were able to survive by planting corn and catching fish. Although they did have some farming, the New England colonies main source of income was shipbuilding and trade due to their many ports.

Each region was colonized for completely different reasons, which can be attributed to the mindset of those that settled there. The Chesapeake colonies were settled much earlier than the New England colonies.

During that time the thought of a new country being formed never crossed anyones minds. The reports of the Spanish striking rich in gold in South America caused the English to pursue gold in the then uncharted areas of North America. The joint-stock company that funded the first English settlers of North America threatened with abandonment in the wilderness if the colonists did not give the company some profit. In the book, History of Virginia written by John Smith, he says that there was no talkbut dig gold, wash gold, refine gold, load gold[Doc. F]. The early colonists of Jamestown were so focused on finding gold that they neglected to gather provisions. Due to this oversight, many died from disease, malnutrition, and starvation. The New England colonies were settled for completely different reasons.

A group of Puritan Separatists called the Pilgrims were the first to set sail to the New England colonies. After living in Holland for 12 years they were worried about the dutchification of their children. They wished for a place

that they could live out their lives as purified Protestants. The New World seemed to them a promising place and upon reaching their famous landing at Plymouth Rock signed the short Mayflower Compact. It was a simple agreement to establish a government and obey regulations they all agreed upon. This document set the precedent of later constitutions and was the first step to a genuine self-government. In the Articles of Agreement in Springfield, Massachusetts, it states that We intend to procure some Godly and faithful minister with whom we purpose to join in church covenant and walk in all the ways of Christ [Doc. D]. Every colony in the New England region was established as some sort of religious haven. Whether it was for the Puritans, the Roman Catholics, or all religions, each colony was settled for religious reasons. The attitude of these early colonists ultimately shaped the way they would evolve.

The two regions way of life greatly differed leading to two different societies. The Chesapeake colonies were heavily dependent on farming and cash crops. They were also heavily influenced by England, the motherland making them very aristocratic. Since there were many vast and slow moving rivers in and around the Chesapeake colonies, English ships could sail easily back and forth from England. The result was that the Chesapeake colonies were very English. They had similar architecture, similar dialects, and acted very much like the English did. What the Chesapeake colonies did not have were a lot of women. A ships list of emigrants bound for Virginia in 1635 states that there were 64 men and only 11 women [Doc. C]. The women were often taken early on and were pregnant before they were married. Later, in the southern

area of the Chesapeake colonies where it was not as cold, a widowarchy prevailed. The men died young and often in the south because there was no cold to kill the germs that caused disease.

A widowarchy allowed the women to inherit the power and estate of their husbands or fathers that died. In the New England colonies much was different. Since the soil was not very fertile, they used trade, fishing, and shipbuilding as their main source of income. Prayer was a large part of the lives of the New England colonies since every colony was home to one or more religion. There were very little ties to England. Unlike many in the Chesapeake region the New England colonies had fast moving rivers that could not be navigated easily. This separation from England was further lengthened during the period of salutary neglect, where England didnt pay any attention to the colonies because of its own conflicts in the old world.

The power of women was much less in the New England colonies than it was in the Chesapeake colonies. A ships list of emigrants bound for New England state that there were 21 men and 19 women [Doc. B]. It was a much more balanced population and coupled with the cold climate killing most disease causing bacteria, men died much later in life. Women had almost no rights in the New England colonies. The way of life of these colonists produced the two separate societies.

These regions had different approaches quickly causing them evolve into two individual cultures. Such influences would further separate future colonies

until each part of the country was unique. This diversity soon paved the way for a new world power that would climb to the top of the worlds standings.

Source: Bailey, Kennedy, and Cohen. The American Pageant 11th edition.

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