

Jamestown, massachusetts bay and plymouth | colonies



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The colonies of Jamestown, Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay each were different by nature, goals, successes, and failures. There were numerous similarities as well as differences. However, each colony was looking for something better that was missing in their main land. Members of each colony had a vision of what they expected the New World to look like. When they arrived, they were given a sense of reality. Each colony had challenges that it would have to overcome to thrive as a new establishment in the New World. The three colonies succeeded at different levels in the New World.

Primary Source Assignment 1

The English migrated to the New World around the early 1600s. I will be discussing the colonies of Jamestown, Plymouth, and Massachusetts Bay. I feel as though the laws and ideas of the colonists from this century have formed American into what it is today.

The first establishment of the New World was Jamestown in 1607. This colony was founded by King James I. King James sent merchants and adventurers that were looking to profit from land and wealth to the New World just as the Spaniards did in Mexico and Peru. The London Company issued a Virginia charter to form plantations in Virginia. This was led by Sir Thomas Smith, one of the wealthiest merchants aboard the ships to the New World. There were approximately 104 settlers that arrived on a peninsula along the James River. These settlers wanted to make a profit to take back to England. This peninsula was known as Jamestown. The colonists in this low lying swamp area was stricken with disease, contaminated drinking water, and was

attacked by Spaniards or Native Americans. This was a serious threat to the early settlers of Jamestown.

Those that came to the New World were mainly men. The majority of the population was men. They outnumbered the women six to one. Jamestown needed male labors to attend to the large plantation used for farming. There was no sense of community due to the lack of women settlers. Jamestown's government focused more on the survival of the colony rather than religion.

Jamestown would not have survived had it not been for the strong leadership capabilities of Captain John Smith. He brought order out of anarchy (Brands, 2009, p. 35). Captain John Smith traded with the Indians for food. Smith was later saved from execution by an Indian named Pocahontas. Smith forced people to work if they wanted to eat. By enforcing this, many of the colonists disliked Smith; however he was able to keep this colony alive during such a harsh time.

During 1609 and 1611, Smith was in England (Brands, 2009, p. 36). This left the Jamestown settlers without a strong leader. During this time, the settlers lacked food, possibly due to the lack of leadership. Some colonists became cannibals in order to attempt to survive. This was known as "Starving Time" (Brands, 2009, p. 36). The few remaining colonists turned to local Powhatan Indians to help them learn the process of planting and harvesting corn and tobacco.

John Rolfe, and English colonists to this region, began to cultivate and experiment with the growing of tobacco. He established a milder form of this crop and exported it to Europe. By doing so, Virginia began to flourish with <https://assignbuster.com/jamestown-massachusetts-bay-and-plymouth-colonies/>

profits. Tobacco was easy to grow due to the mild climate and fertile soil. Slave trade began to evolve around the tobacco plantations. Land owners would hire out indentured servants from their home land to work these crops to increase production. Slave trade became a leading industry. Jamestown mainly focused on one product for profit.

After “starving time,” laws were written for the colony to provide a sense of order to their situation. The laws, also known as Laws of Virginia, contained duties and obligations of the settlers. If the duties and obligations were not followed there were penalties. Officers were required to ensure that all attended service twice daily and to punish those who irreverently used God’s name or challenged authority. There was only one church, God, and law. Many believed that these laws were necessary in order to survive. These laws were not attractive to potential settlers to Jamestown. The Virginia Company agreed to for the House of Burgess that would make the colony more attractive to the wealthy. The House of Burgess was the first formed in 1619 (Brands, 2009, p. 39). This form of government made decisions for this region. It was overseen by a council in England that could overrule any decisions made from the House of Burgess. The House allowed wealthy planters a say in the government. The existence of the House of Burgess was officially recognized by King Charles in 1639 (Brands, 2009, p. 39).

Massachusetts Bay colony was lead by a strong, religious, Puritan leader named John Winthrop. He established order prior to arriving in America. His actions and ideas gave the Puritan colony its character. He agreed to come to American with the Massachusetts Bay Company. Winthrop was chosen as governor. He presented a sermon on the ship named Arbella. John Winthrop <https://assignbuster.com/jamestown-massachusetts-bay-and-plymouth-colonies/>

pushed for a community that revolved around God. Full citizenship was only available to church members. The colonists developed a church government known as Congregationalism. The people of this colony were the church and they agreed to uphold God's law. Just because you lived in a particular community did not mean that you had to attend their church.

Massachusetts Bay Colony largely consisted of Puritan Separatists that wanted religious freedom from the Church of England. They were hoping to be able to practice how they wanted. They wanted to purify the Anglican Church. The vast population of Massachusetts Bay was devoted English families. They focused more on a strong sense of community that revolved around God and family. This strong bond ensured their survival as a colony.

The government did not partake in a democracy or a theocracy. The elected officials ruled in favor of the people and their responsibilities were to God. Groups of men and women joined together to observe shared goals. The community formed a meetinghouse for this to take place. Even though many villages did not agree on several issues, they relied on the civil courts settle their indifferences. The civil court later formed Lawes and Liberties (Brands, 2009, p. 46). This was a clear explanation of the colonists' duties and obligations to their region.

The Massachusetts Bay colony chose not to put all their eggs into one basket as the Jamestown settlers did. This colony had many products to sell and trade. Their climate was colder and the soil was rocky which is unsuitable for farming. This Boston colony relied more on small scale agriculture, fishing, shipbuilding, and trading. However, just as Jamestown, this colony traded

with, learned from, and ended up at war with the local Indians. They, too, pushed the Indians off of the land when the colony began to expand. Due to the fact that the communities were so family oriented, farms were only large enough for feed their families. The men of the household worked these farms. Since the farms were rather small there was no need for slaves.

Massachusetts Bay survived due to more favorable conditions than Jamestown. They had better climate, clean water, and plumbing that helped prevent the spread of disease in their communities. Many of the colonists led long easy going lives due to the stress free God and family oriented structure of their communities.

Pilgrims set sail for the New World just as the colonists of Massachusetts Bay did; to find religious freedom. The Separatists moved to Holland and soon feared that their children were going to become Dutch. The Pilgrims were also Puritans like Boston. They selected their own leaders of the church. The Pilgrims requested land from the Virginia Company. A patent was given for them to settle north of the Virginia Colony. A storm caused the Mayflower to veer off course. It landed the settlers in Plymouth.

The patent they had for Virginia did not have validity in this area of New England. With no patent, the colonists knew that they would not have authorization to form a civil form of government. To prevent the community from anarchy, 41 men signed a patent, known as the Mayflower Compact (Brands, 2009, p. 42). This document gave the government guidelines on how to conduct themselves the way God had wanted them to.

William Bradford assisted in drafting the Mayflower Compact. He later became the second governor of this region. Even though the first several months claimed nearly half of the colonists due to disease and hunger, Bradford encouraged the men and women that it was possible to survive in the New World. Bradford was the person to help quite the differences between the Indians and the colony.

Like Jamestown, Plymouth was settled in the lands of the Indians. Squanto was joined with Massasoit in greeting and interacting with the Pilgrims. Bradford was the go between. These Native Americans taught the Pilgrims about hunting, fishing, and agriculture. Massasoit realized that the Indians and colonists shared many interests. Squanto was the interpreter between the Pilgrims and Indians. The Pilgrims owed their survival skills to Squanto, who taught them how to grow many crops and survive the wilderness. The Pilgrims did set up a trading post to trade corn in return for furs from the Indians.

The settlers engaged in fishing and lumbering to sale to England for profit. However, the Pilgrims never mastered the skill to fish and the financial return for exported lumber was small. In the beginning, the colony was finically sound. However, due to the limited economic return, Plymouth later became part of the larger Massachusetts Bay colony.

In conclusion, population, political, economic, religion and social systems played a large role in Jamestown, Massachusetts Bay, and Plymouth. Though the origins of each colony were English, they all developed different views. Massachusetts and Plymouth were more religious and concerned with the

commonwealth of the people because of their strong God and family oriented communities. These colonies migrated as families of six to ten that made for a strong family bond. They had a diverse product due to cold weather and poor quality of soil. They participated in small agriculture, fishing, trading, and shipbuilding. Many of the Massachusetts and Plymouth settlers live long happy lives because they were focused and healthy. Jamestown on the other hand had a harsh non religious form of government due to want to survive. Jamestown settlers were mainly male with a sense of personal gain. As a result of very few women, this colony lacked a sense of community. This colony had a mild climate and fertile soil which produced mainly tobacco which was a major export product. They lived harder laboring lives in an unhealthy environment. The challenges that all the colonies faced and managed as well as their belief in God, helped them overcome their differences and eventually form a nation.