

Module 1: American Beginnings - 1607 to the 1750s
Topic 2 Content: Economy of the New England Colonies

Introduction



The economy of the New England colonies differed from the economy of the Southern colonies. The Southern colonies relied on large plantations that farmed one type of crop. These plantations required a large amount of slave labor. The economy of the New England colonies differed because of the rocky soil, elevated landscape, and access to water. Click each icon to learn about the agriculture, industry, and use of slaves in the New England colonies.

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Agriculture



The New England colonies produced several crops instead of a single crop, as in the South. Cold winters and rocky soil restricted New Englanders to smaller farms. These farms were mostly based on small-scale subsistence farming practices. Farmers raised a variety of crops and livestock, such as wheat, corn, cattle, and hogs. Any surplus of goods from New England was sold to the West Indies. Sugar was very profitable during this time, so plantation owners in the West Indies used farmland for growing sugar rather than crops.

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Industry



The New England colonies had a diverse commercial economy. Based on the geographic location of the New England colonies, industries such as grinding wheat, harvesting fish, sawing lumber, mining, and shipbuilding were prominent.

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Slavery



Because of the differences in the types of farms and the types of crops that were produced, colonists in New England had less incentive to use slave labor. Slavery did exist in the New England colonies. Slaves in the North had a greater legal standing than slaves in the South. Slaves could sue and be sued, and had the right to appeal to the highest courts.