

Topic 2.2

European Colonization (1607–1754)

You Will Learn To:

- Explain how and why various European colonies developed and expanded from 1607 to 1754.

European Colonization Patterns

We begin Unit 2 with a broad look at European colonization of North America. We'll examine the development of Spanish, English, French, and Dutch colonies while highlighting similarities and differences in their colonization patterns. We'll pay special attention to the motivations for migration, settler demographics, primary economic pursuits, relations with Native peoples, and use of African labor, all of which help define European colonial patterns.

	Spanish	English	French	Dutch
Colonial motivations	Conquest, competition, and conversion	Economic opportunity, land, and desire to settle communities based on religion	Desire for furs, commercial interests	Desire for furs, commercial interests
Relations with American Indians	Subjugated native populations	Expelled native populations	Established strong trade relations with Natives	Established strong trade relations with Natives
Importing enslaved labor	Imported large numbers of enslaved Africans	Imported large numbers of enslaved Africans	Imported small numbers of enslaved Africans	Imported small numbers of enslaved Africans

Let's begin with an overview. In Unit 1, we discussed Spain's conquest of Mexico and the development of colonial institutions including encomienda, Spanish missions, and the development of colonial social hierarchy from 1492 to 1607.

By the late 16th century, the Spanish were looking to repeat their early successes in Mexico but faced challenges. Poverty, disease, and low populations, combined with Native attacks, undermined the stability of Spanish colonies in North America.

In the early 17th century, the French claimed much of the northeastern portion of the continent. At the end of the century, the French added to their territory when La Salle claimed the Mississippi River and its adjacent territory, giving France a massive claim to North America. However, the French sent few people to protect such an immense territory.

Quebec was France's only real settler colony. The rest of the French settlements were outposts and forts with few, mostly male occupants. Unlike the Spanish, the French focused primarily on commercial ties with Native peoples instead of religious conversion. The French partnered with American Indians to extract furs for export to Europe.

In the 17th century, the Dutch American colony, New Amsterdam, was a commercial venture and attracted a small but diverse population. As the financial bankers of Europe, the Dutch formed joint-stock companies to protect their economic interests in the New World. Like the French, the Dutch relied on American Indians to procure goods for export. Armies sailed with Dutch joint-stock companies, protecting their economic interests throughout the world.

In 1607, the English began establishing settler colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. The English colonies had higher colonial populations than other European colonies did. English colonial ventures happened for a variety of reasons, including a desire for increased social mobility and religious freedom. The English initially depended on American Indians for survival, but relations soured as the English expanded settlements into Native lands.

Spanish Settlement in North America

During the 17th century, the Spanish expanded their North American settlements in Florida and the Southwest. In both regions, the Spanish continued their efforts to extract wealth from the land and convert Native populations to Christianity. Through the use of various edicts, justifications, and exploitative systems, the Spanish extracted labor from American Indians and incorporated Native Americans, free Africans, and enslaved Africans into the fabric of colonial society.

Spanish Florida, St. Augustine, and the Southeast

Between 1607 and 1754, the Spanish slowly colonized and developed Spanish Florida; however, the colony struggled with disease, poverty, and a low population.



Construction of St. Augustine

To help with the last of these problems, the Spanish subjugated and converted American Indians, using forced labor to develop the Spaniards' capital city, St. Augustine. As in the Southwest, the Spanish established their mission system in Florida.

New Mexico, Santa Fe, and the Southwest

In 1598, Juan de Oñate led a party of mestizos and Christian Natives to colonize the Southwest and convert the native Pueblo peoples while using their labor to mine gold and silver.

Like Florida, New Mexico was a poverty-stricken colony with a sparse colonial population and an indigenous population greatly reduced by disease. The colony's primary economic activity was small-scale farming.

In 1610, the Spanish founded the governmental seat in Santa Fe and, as in Florida, established missions. New Mexico's population grew and diversified due to intermarriage between Spanish colonial men and Native women. In the late 1600s, Santa Fe had a few thousand residents, who were mostly mestizos and Natives.

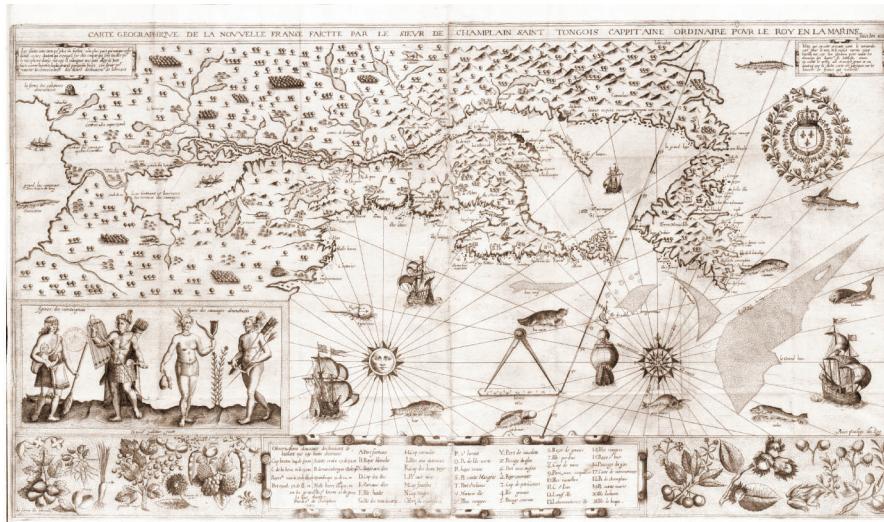
The Spanish also colonized parts of present-day Texas and southern California. In the early 1700s, the Spanish expanded these settlements to bolster their claims to these territories in the face of Russian and French exploration in western North America.

The Far-Reaching Networks of the French and Dutch

Both French and Dutch colonial efforts focused on establishing profitable trade and therefore involved relatively few Europeans. Instead, each of these colonial powers used traders to establish diplomatic and economic ties with Native Americans. These ties allowed the Dutch and French to tap into existing Native trade networks and extract furs and other products for export to Europe.

New France and Louisiana

In the Northeast, Samuel de Champlain explored the St. Lawrence River, allowing the French to capture the flow of furs along the river. French control of the St. Lawrence gave them a geographic advantage because it ran into the continent's interior. In 1608, Champlain founded Quebec and forged alliances with the Huron tribe, which controlled the most fertile hunting grounds for beaver pelts.



Map of New France (1612)

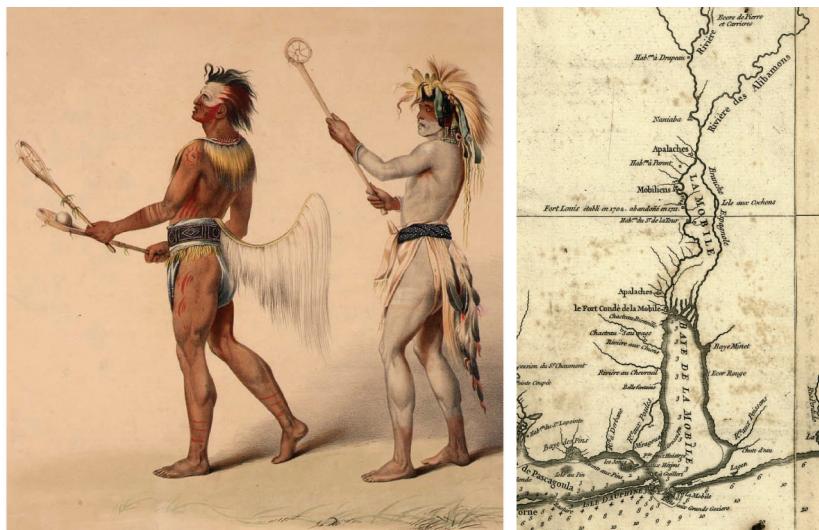
In 1610, Champlain and the French began supplying the Huron with guns in their war against the Iroquois Confederacy, known as the Beaver Wars.



New France was exclusively Catholic and did not accept French Huguenot (Protestant) dissenters. The winters in the Great Lakes were harsh, and almost all Frenchmen who went there returned to France within a year. As a result, the population of New France grew slowly; by 1700, Quebec had only 15,000 residents.



In 1681, Robert Sieur de La Salle claimed the Mississippi River for France, giving France control of two of North America's most important waterways and control of most of the interior of the country. Calling the French claim "Louisiana" in honor of their king, this new territory combined with New France to give France a large portion of North America, including its most important waterway, the Mississippi.



The French settled near American Indian nations

In 1702, the Mobile colony (north of the modern site of Mobile, Alabama) became the first settler colony in Louisiana. The colony was named in honor of the local Mobilian tribes—highlighting the significance of French-Native relations. In 1718, France established New Orleans, a valuable port where the Mississippi River meets the Gulf of Mexico.

As a colonial venture, French Louisiana struggled. The French settlements had low populations and few supplies, and France was preoccupied with religious wars at home and consequently sent few resources to Louisiana. Additionally, Louisiana was not initially profitable. Unlike furs in the Great Lakes region, there wasn't a highly profitable commodity that could be easily harvested through trade with Natives in French Louisiana.

By the 1740s, migration from French Louisiana had expanded the population in the region. The French began importing enslaved African labor to cultivate sugar and rice, which grew well in the warm, wet climate of the Lower Mississippi Valley.

New Netherland

Holland was at the center of Europe's economic transformation. During the first half of the 17th century, Dutch traders built a series of trading posts across the world.

These Dutch commercial enterprises were backed by fleets of armed men-of-war ships that protected the interests of Holland's powerful joint-stock companies. These companies generated immense wealth for Holland, making the Dutch a military and economic powerhouse during the 17th century.



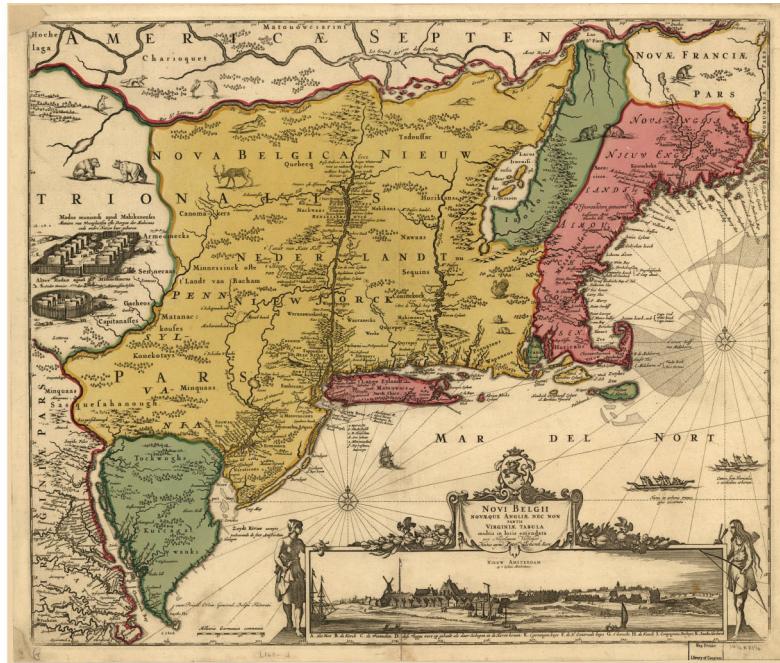
The first view of Manhattan Island 1626–8

In 1609, the explorer Henry Hudson navigated the waterways of the Northeast, claiming for the Dutch the river that today bears his name. In the New Netherlands, the Dutch founded Fort Orange (today's Albany) in 1614 and the colony of New Amsterdam (today's Manhattan) in 1625.



Plan of New York or New Amsterdam (as in Sep' 1661), also Long Island, Hudson River

Over time, New Amsterdam became an important commercial center with a diverse population. French Huguenots, Jews, and Catholics, as well American Indians, free Blacks, and enslaved Africans, were just some of the groups to reside in New Amsterdam.



Dutch North American colonies (1656)

Control of the Hudson River helped further Holland's goal of exporting New World commodities. Like French traders, the Dutch expanded and strengthened their trade networks for furs by establishing alliances with the Natives. In 1644, the English captured New Amsterdam and allowed the Dutch merchants to continue their businesses. The new English colony of New York operated much as it had under the Dutch.

The English Colonize the Atlantic Seaboard

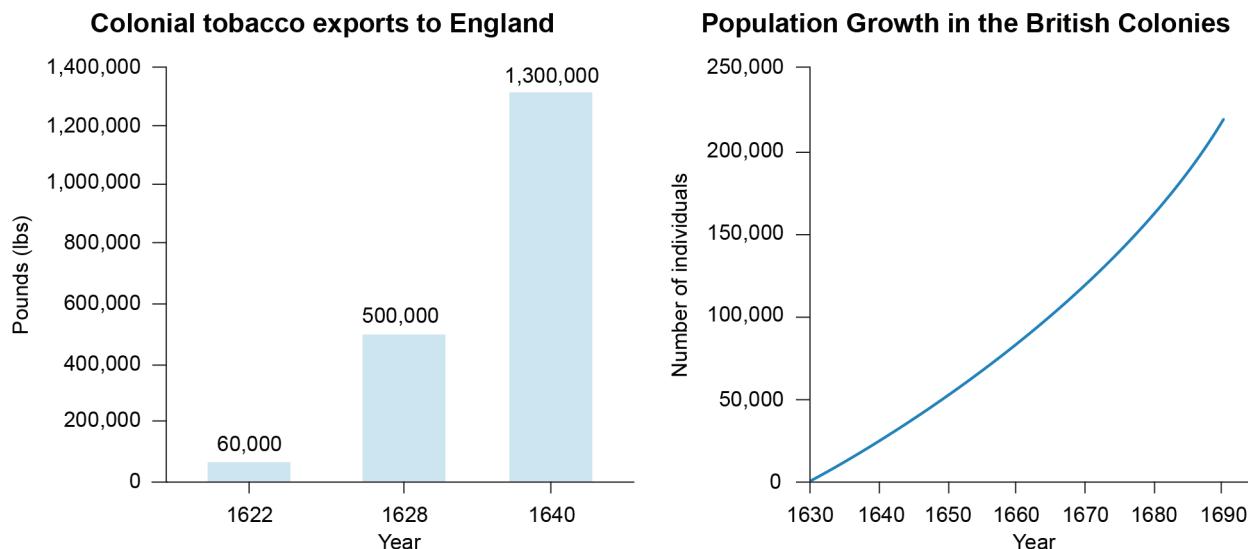
Far more migrants moved to the English colonies than to other European colonies. English men and women, as well as other Europeans, migrated to the Americas in search of a better life. These settlers were motivated by chances of upward social mobility, economic prosperity, and religious freedom.

In 1607, the first permanent settlement, Jamestown Colony, was established where the James River flows into Chesapeake Bay. Financed by the Virginia Company, the first 500 settlers to Jamestown were mostly well-to-do men hoping to find gold or other precious minerals. Few women, children, or skilled laborers—such as barrel makers and carpenters—made the initial voyage.



As a result, the colony struggled. Few settlers had the skills needed to establish a new society. Many colonists pressured local Natives for food, angering the powerful chief in the region and bringing about attacks on the colony. In 1609, many of the colonists starved, died of disease, or were killed by Natives. Of the 500 original settlers, by 1610, less than 100 were left.

Shortly after this "starving time," Jamestown's fortunes turned. John Rolfe, a wealthy settler, smuggled tobacco seeds from Mexico to the colony. Fortunately for the English, tobacco grew extremely well in the Chesapeake region.



Tobacco helped grow the population and the wealth of the Virginia colony and encouraged another migration of English settlers to America. By the 1630s, families and young adults, including many with practical skills, had settled in northeastern North America, which they called "New England." These migrants, mostly Puritans, were attracted to the social blank slate of America, where they could create idealized religious communities.

Things to Remember

- During the 17th and early 18th centuries, the Spanish expanded their settlements in Spanish Florida and the Southwest. In both regions, the Spanish continued their efforts to extract wealth from the land and convert Native populations to Christianity.
- The French had primarily economic motives for colonization, especially monopolizing the fur trade. France controlled two of the continent's most important waterways, which—along with crucial Native alliances—helped extract commodities in the interior of the continent.
- Like the French, the Dutch had commercial interests and forged alliances with American Indian groups to secure furs and other commodities for export.
- In comparison to the other European colonies, the English colonies had far more settlers. They came seeking social mobility, religious freedom, and better living conditions in America.

Key Terms and Developments

Beaver Wars

Dutch West India Company

Virginia Company

Sante Fe

St. Augustine

New Amsterdam

La Salle

2.2 Check for Understanding

- 1. Which of the following colonizers were the most interested in converting native populations to Christianity?**
 - A. Spanish
 - B. English
 - C. French
 - D. Dutch

- 2. Which of the following colonizers were most interested in commercial ventures and regularly traded with American Indians?**
 - A. Spanish and Dutch
 - B. French and English
 - C. French and Dutch
 - D. English and Spanish

- 3. In contrast to the other European colonies in North America, British colonies**
 - A. were largely settled by families
 - B. had strong diplomatic ties with American Indians
 - C. lacked enslaved African labor
 - D. All of these