

Why People Came to the New World

A long, long, time ago, only Native Americans lived in what is now known as the United States and Canada. At first the Europeans came to the New World to explore and visit. Other visitors to the new world were fishermen who came to fish. Later traders arrived to trade tools, blankets, and other things with the Indians. The Native Americans gave them furs in return. Each time these visitors returned home, they told everyone about the wonderful things that could be found in the New World, "America". There were lots of forests, animals, water, and rich farmland.

Soon people from other countries wanted to live in America. When a country builds a settlement beyond its borders, it is called a colony. People from Spain were the first Europeans to build a colony in America. In 1584, England was in a race with Spain to start new colonies in the New World. Sir Walter Raleigh sent over 108 men to America. After a very hard year, these men returned to England and this colony failed. Three years later, Raleigh sent 117 men, women and children to America. John White was one of the 117 men. His daughter, Eleanor Dare, had the first English baby born in America. Her name was Virginia Dare. John White returned to England to get supplies for the colony. Because Spain was having a war with England, there were no ships available for three years. When John White returned to the colony, the entire colony had disappeared. What happened to Virginia Dare and the other colonist remains a mystery. Their settlement is known as the Lost Colony of Roanoke.

In 1606, England's "Virginia Company of London" sold shares of ownership or stocks to the New World. By selling stocks, they were able to share the cost of starting a new colony. If the colony did well, the stockholders would make lots of money. The wealthy people were able to buy the stocks. If you were poor and wanted to go to America, you could promise to give the company part of any gold or silver you found in the New World. This colony was called Jamestown after King James 1.

In 1620, a group called Separatists came to the New World. They were avoiding religious persecution in England. Today we refer to them as Pilgrims. A pilgrim is a person who makes a journey for religious reasons. This colony was called Plymouth (it was also spelled Plimoth). Many pilgrims died during the first year. A Native American named Squanto, and other Indians helped the pilgrims to survive. To thank God and the Indians, the Pilgrims held a celebration in the fall of 1621. The Indians were invited to the feast, which was the very first Thanksgiving.

In 1629, another religious group called the Puritans came to the New World. They were also seeking religious freedom. They wanted to establish a place that would set an example of how God wanted people to live. Many died coming to the New World. Many died while trying to survive in the New World. So why did people come to America?

Settled primarily throughout the 1600s, England's American colonies were home to diverse groups of people. The Northern colonies were frequently settled by people escaping religious persecution in Europe. In the South, economic interests tended to prevail, with most colonies populated by profit seekers. Some people, like the millions of slaves who were brought from Africa, came unwillingly to America.

Religious Freedom

Colonies such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Maryland were settled primarily by people seeking religious freedom. Pilgrim Separatists desired a break from the Church of England, and arrived in Massachusetts aboard the Mayflower in 1620. Later, a different religious sect, the Puritans, arrived in Massachusetts fleeing persecution in England. Unlike the Separatists, the Puritans did not want to break from the Church of England; they wanted to "purify" it. This was met with opposition -- including violence -- and by 1630 nearly 20,000 Puritans fled to Massachusetts. Colonies such as Maryland were founded as a refuge for other persecuted religious groups.

English persecution -- like a ban on a Catholic priest officiating a marriage of two Catholics -- prompted many to come to Maryland. Lord Baltimore founded Maryland as a Catholic refuge in 1632.

Economic Gain

In the Southern colonies, economic incentives often trumped religious intentions. Cash crops -- and the profits they rendered -- were a primary motive for early immigration to Virginia and the Carolinas. As early as 1613, John Rolfe planted tobacco in Virginia and began exporting it to Europe. Land and its crops were a huge incentive for early colonists in the South. In Jamestown, Virginia for example, a colonist would be given 50 acres plus an additional 50 more for each indentured servant he brought with him.

Avoiding Debtor's Prison

Georgia, which was not founded until 1733, was unique among England's American colonies. James Oglethorpe, the colony's founder, envisioned a Utopian society in which English debtors could improve their lives. By the early 1700s, Britain had numerous citizens who were imprisoned for their debts. King George, however, was unconcerned about English debtors. Instead, he saw Georgia as an attractive opportunity to create a buffer zone between Spanish-owned Florida, French-owned Louisiana and the English colonies farther north. He approved the Georgian experiment, and thousands of debtors moved to the colony. Within two decades, however, Oglethorpe's dream of a society in which debtors could improve their lives had failed, and King George revoked the charter and converted Georgia into a society much like its counterparts immediately to the north.

Enslavement

Not all early Americans came to English colonies willingly. Beginning with the first Dutch ship that brought 20 slaves to Jamestown in 1619, slavery rapidly expanded in colonial America. Though poor record-keeping limits what can be known about the number of slaves brought to America, estimates suggest that as many as 6 to 7 million Africans were brought to America in the 18th century alone. In the South especially, slaves often represented a significant proportion of the local population.

1. The article gives many reasons as to why people wanted to come to America, give three reasons the articles states as to why people moved to America. RARE
2. What is a colony? Why do you believe England and Spain were in a race to become the first Europeans to start a new colony in America? RA
3. On the first page there are 4 important dates to American colonization 1584, 1606, 1620 and 1629. Explain the importance of each year. RA
4. The article states "Not all Americans came to the English Colonies willingly" explain this quote. RA
5. Explain how religious freedom was one of the biggest reasons as to why people came to America. RA
6. In your opinion what was the biggest reason people came to the New World, and what is the meaning of that phrase New World? RA