

3.3 Massachusetts: A New England Colony

In the early 1600s, religion was very important in England. The king ruled the official Church of England, also called the Anglican Church. However, not everyone agreed with the church practices.

One group, who came to be called Puritans, wanted to “purify” the Anglican Church by making services simpler and doing away with ranks of authority. Another group, called Separatists, wanted to separate from the English church and form their own congregations. When the king began jailing Separatists for not attending Anglican services, some of them moved to Holland, where they could practice their religion freely.

But Holland wasn't home, and the Separatists wanted their children to grow up in an English culture. In 1620, about 102 Separatists set sail for America aboard the Mayflower. The Separatists were called Pilgrims because they traveled for religious reasons. The Pilgrims hoped to build their idea of a perfect society in America. During their voyage, they signed an agreement called the **Mayflower Compact** that described the way they would govern themselves in the Americas.

After a long, uncomfortable journey across the Atlantic, the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, near Cape Cod. Luckily for them, the local Indians welcomed them. Without the help of these American Indians, the Pilgrims might not have survived their first winter. The Indians taught them how to plant crops, trap animals, and catch fish. In 1621, the Pilgrims invited the Indians to share their first harvest in a three-day feast of thanksgiving. Americans still celebrate this holiday.

Ten years later, a large group of Puritans decided to follow the Pilgrims to America. The king was relieved to see them go and sent them off with a charter for the colony of Massachusetts Bay. The charter said that the Massachusetts colonists would govern themselves. The Puritans were pleased with the charter because they wanted to build a community governed by the rules of the Bible. They hoped to set an example for the rest of the world. Their governor, John Winthrop, said, “We must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us.”

John Winthrop was a founder and, later, governor of Massachusetts. Here he is giving a blessing to soldiers in the colony.



Mayflower Compact an agreement that Pilgrims wrote and signed describing how they would govern themselves in the Americas

Massachusetts New England Colony

- **Founders** Pilgrims led by William Bedford (1620) and Puritans led by John Winthrop (1630)
- **Settlers** Puritans escaping religious persecution
- **Climate** Harsh winters, warm summers
- **Geography** Sandy coast with good ports, rich pastures, forests
- **Economy/Occupations** Crop and livestock farming, lumbering, shops, shipping
- **Religion** Puritan
- **Government** Self-governing, with strong religious influence

slave trade the business of capturing, transporting, and selling people as slaves

Rhode Island New England Colony

- **Founders** Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson
- **Settlers** People seeking religious freedom
- **Climate** Hot, humid summers; cold, snowy winters
- **Geography** Coastal lowlands; flat, rocky woodlands
- **Economy/Occupations** Farming (large cattle and dairy farms, small independent farms), lumbering, shipbuilding, fishing, whaling, trade
- **Religion** Various faiths
- **Government** Self-governing

This woodcut shows Roger Williams building a crude cabin after he fled Massachusetts in the bitter winter.



3.4 Rhode Island: A New England Colony

The Puritans of Massachusetts gained the freedom to practice their religion the way they wanted to. But instead of granting similar freedom to others, they set up a government that required everyone in the colony to worship as they did.

When a young minister named Roger Williams began preaching different ideas, the Puritans put him on trial. Williams believed that all people should be able to worship in any way they chose. “Forced worship,” he declared, “stinks in God’s nostrils.”

The Puritans ordered Williams sent back to England. Instead, on a cold winter day in 1636, he left his wife and children and fled south. After trudging through snow for days, he met a group of Indians near Narragansett Bay. The Indians cared for him until spring. When his family and a few followers joined him, Williams bought land from the Indians for a settlement. He called it Providence, a word meaning “the guidance and care of God.”

Williams welcomed people with different religious beliefs. Two years after he and his followers settled Providence, a colonist named Anne Hutchinson was also forced to leave Massachusetts for preaching against the Puritans. She and her family followed Williams and established a settlement called Portsmouth. In 1647, these and other settlements joined together to become the colony of Rhode Island. In 1663, Rhode Island elected an assembly to govern the colony.

The ideal of freedom in Rhode Island did not extend to enslaved Africans. Sea merchants soon discovered the riches that could be made in the **slave trade**. As a result, Rhode Island became one of the largest slave-trading centers in the world. Slave trading helped

make the fortunes of some of the wealthiest families in New England. At the same time, the **isolated** coves along the Rhode Island coast provided perfect hiding places for pirates and smugglers.

Puritans in other colonies were disgusted by these activities. Reverend Cotton Mather of Boston called Rhode Island “the sewer of New England.” To these Puritans, the actions of slave traders in Rhode Island justified having rejected these people and ideas from their own communities. Using a word that implied “criminals,” they invented their own name for the colony: “Rogues’ Island.”



3.5 Connecticut: A New England Colony

Even in Massachusetts, not all Puritans shared exactly the same ideas. Thomas Hooker was a Puritan clergyman who lived in New Towne, a fast-growing community next to Boston. Hooker didn't always agree with the laws and leadership in Massachusetts. When he heard about a fertile valley along a river to the west, he convinced his family and about 100 other people to move there with him.

It took Hooker and his followers two weeks to travel to the Connecticut Valley with their animals and belongings. There they established a settlement on the site of an old Dutch fort, where an earlier group of English colonists had settled. They called their new community Hartford. In 1639, Hartford joined with two other settlements to form the colony of Connecticut.

Hooker believed that government should be based on "the free consent of the people," to whom belongs "the choice of public [officials] by God's own allowance." He helped draw up the first written plan of government for any of the colonies. This document was called the Fundamental Orders. The Fundamental Orders guaranteed the right to vote to all men who were members of the Puritan church.

Meanwhile, other Puritans formed a separate colony nearby called New Haven. The Puritans of New Haven agreed to live by the "word of God." Their laws were stricter than those in Hooker's Connecticut colony.

Neither of these colonies, however, was legally **authorized** by the king. Then, in 1662, King Charles II granted a charter for a new Connecticut colony that included New Haven. The charter gave Connecticut colonists more rights than those enjoyed by any other colonists except Rhode Island's. Legend says that when King James II sent Governor Andros to Hartford 15 years later to take back the colonists' charter, someone stole it and hid it in the trunk of a huge white oak tree. The "Charter Oak" became a symbol of Connecticut's freedom.

Thomas Hooker and about a hundred others established the community of Hartford in the fertile Connecticut Valley. It later became a part of the colony of Connecticut.

Connecticut New England Colony

- **Founder** Thomas Hooker
- **Settlers** Puritans seeking a new settlement
- **Climate** Cold winters, mild summers
- **Geography** Forested hills, sea-coast
- **Economy/Occupations** Farming (crops and livestock), shipbuilding, fishing, whaling
- **Religion** Puritan
- **Government** written constitution (Fundamental Orders), self-governing

New Hampshire

- 1623

- Sir Ferdinando Gorges
and
John Mason

For climate
&
religion
compare # to
RI + Mass + CT

} Leader / Founder

- President and council appointed
by King & the assembly is
elected by people

} gov.

- Trading & fishing villages that
were apart of Mass. but
asked to leave and be their
own colony

} Reason
founded