

Life in the New England Colonies



The New England colonies include Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island. The lifestyle of New England's people was greatly impacted by both its geography and climate.

New England's economy depended on the environment. Its location near the Atlantic Ocean along a jagged coastline determined how people made a living. People in New England made money through fishing, whaling, shipbuilding, trading in its port cities and providing naval supplies. One of the busiest port cities was Boston.

People in New England could not make a living from farming because most of the land was not suited to farming due to the hilly terrain and rocky soil. The nature of the soil was partially caused by the Appalachian Mountains. Another factor that made farming for profit difficult was climate; New England experienced moderate summers and cold winters. The growing season was simply too short to make farming profitable and most farms were small family ones. So rather than farming, many people not involved in industries involving the water were either skilled craftsman or shopkeepers.

Towns and villages were very important in the daily lives of New Englanders. Their social lives revolved around village events and attending church. The Sabbath or Sunday was a high point of the week. Work was not allowed and it provided an opportunity to visit one another. Many of the New England colonies were founded by religious reformers and separatists searching for religious freedom.

Civic events were also central to New England life. Town meetings determined answers to important questions about running the colony. Once a year all adult males met to participate in this decision making process. These town meetings were an important step in forming the democracy we have today.

1. Which colonies were in New England?

2. How did people make a living?

3. Describe the land.

4. What group of people founded New England?

5. Why were town meetings important?