

# Competing Claims in North America

## TERMS & NAMES

- New France
- Jamestown
- Pilgrims
- Puritans
- New Netherland
- French and Indian War
- Metacom

## MAIN IDEA

Several European nations fought for control of North America, and England eventually emerged victorious.

## WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The English settlers in North America left a legacy of law and government that guides the United States today.

**SETTING THE STAGE** Spain's successful colonization efforts in the Americas did not go unnoticed. Other European nations soon became interested in obtaining their own valuable colonies across the Atlantic. The Treaty of Tordesillas had divided the newly discovered lands between Spain and Portugal. However, other European countries ignored the treaty. They set out to build their own empires in the Americas.

## European Nations Settle North America

Magellan's voyage showed that ships could reach Asia by way of the Pacific Ocean. Spain claimed the route around the southern tip of South America. Other European countries hoped to find an easier and more direct route to the Pacific. If it existed, a northwest route through North America to Asia would become a highly profitable trade route. Not finding the route, the French, English, and Dutch instead established colonies in North America.

## CONNECT to TODAY

### Cajun Culture

French culture still thrives in Louisiana due in large part to the influence of people known as Cajuns. Cajuns are the descendants of French colonists who in 1604 settled the region known as Acadia in eastern Canada. Battles with the British led thousands of Acadians to move to French settlements in Louisiana, where their legacy lives on.

Today, more than 1 million Louisianans speak French. In addition, Cajun food, such as a spicy, thick soup called gumbo, is popular not only in the Bayou region but also throughout the United States. Also popular around the nation are the fast-paced sounds of Cajun zydeco music.

**Explorers Establish New France** Just as Columbus had before them, the early French explorers sailed west with dreams of reaching the East Indies. One such explorer was Giovanni da Verrazzano (VEHR-uh-ZAHN-noh), an Italian in the service of France. In 1524, he sailed to North America in search of a possible sea route to the Pacific. While he did not find the route, Verrazzano did discover what is today New York Harbor. Ten years later, the Frenchman Jacques Cartier (kahr-TYAY) reached a gulf off the eastern coast of Canada that led to a broad river. Cartier named the river the St. Lawrence. He followed it inward until he reached a large island dominated by a hill. He named the island Mont Royal, which later became known as Montreal. In 1608, another French explorer, Samuel de Champlain, sailed up the St. Lawrence. He laid claim to a region he called Quebec. The settlement grew. It eventually became the base of France's colonial empire in North America, known as **New France**.

After establishing Quebec, the French penetrated the heart of the North American continent. In 1673, French priest Jacques Marquette and trader Louis Joliet explored the Great Lakes and the upper Mississippi River. Nearly 10 years later, Sieur de La Salle explored the lower Mississippi. He claimed the entire river valley for

France. He named it Louisiana in honor of the French king, Louis XIV. By the early 1700s, New France covered much of what is now the midwest United States and eastern Canada. (See the map on page 493.)

**A Trading Empire** France's North American empire was immense. But it was sparsely populated. By 1760, the European population of New France had grown to only about 65,000. A large number of French colonists had no desire to build towns or raise families. These settlers included Catholic priests who sought to convert

## THINK THROUGH HISTORY

### A. Summarizing

Why were France's North American holdings so sparsely populated?

Native Americans. They also included young, single men engaged in what had become New France's main economic activity: fur trade.

By the late 1500s, one of the hottest fashion trends in Europe was hats made of beaver skin. Beavers were almost extinct in Europe but plentiful in North America. This led to a thriving trade in furs. Unlike the English, the French were less interested in occupying territories than they were in making money off the land.

**The English Settle at Jamestown** The explorations of the Spanish and French fired the imagination of the English. In 1606, a company of London investors obtained from King James a charter to found a colony in North America. In 1607, the company's three ships—and more than 100 settlers—pushed out of an English harbor. Four months later, the North American shore rose along the horizon. After reaching the coast of Virginia, the vessels slipped into a broad coastal river. They sailed inland until they reached a small peninsula. There, the colonists climbed off their ships and claimed the land as theirs. They named the settlement **Jamestown** in honor of their king.

The colony's start was disastrous. The settlers were more interested in finding gold than planting crops. They soon fell victim to their harsh surroundings. During the first few years, seven out of every ten people died of hunger, disease, or fighting with the Native Americans. After several months in this hostile environment, one settler described the terrible situation:

### A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Thus we lived for the space of five months in this miserable distress . . . our men night and day groaning in every corner of the fort, most pitiful to hear. If there were any conscience in men, it would make their hearts to bleed to hear the pitiful murmuring and outcries of our sick men for relief, every night and day for the space of six weeks: some departing out of the World, many times three or four in a night; in the morning their bodies trailed out of their cabins like dogs, to be buried.

A JAMESTOWN COLONIST, quoted in *A New World*

Despite their nightmarish start, the colonists eventually gained a foothold in their new land. Jamestown became England's first permanent settlement in North America. The colony's outlook improved greatly after farmers there discovered tobacco. High demand in England for tobacco turned it into a profitable cash crop, or a crop grown primarily for sale. The colony, however, continued to struggle financially. Jamestown's investors finally let King James take over the colony. As a royal colony, Jamestown slowly grew and prospered.

**Puritans Create a "New England"** In 1620, as the colonists at Jamestown were struggling to survive, a group known as **Pilgrims** founded a second English colony, Plymouth, in Massachusetts. Persecuted for their religious beliefs in England, these colonists sought religious freedom. Eight years later, a group known as **Puritans** also sought religious freedom from England's Anglican Church. They established a larger colony at nearby Massachusetts Bay.

The Puritans wanted to build a model community that would set an example for other Christians to follow. Although the colony experienced early difficulties, it gradually took hold. This was due in large part to the numerous families in the colony, unlike the mostly single, male population in Jamestown. Family life created a sense of order among the settlers. It also ensured that the population would reproduce itself.

**The Dutch Found New Netherland** Following the English and French into North America were the Dutch. The Dutch had established the Dutch East India Company in 1602 to compete for trade in the Indian Ocean. Several years later, they turned



The first English colonists arrive at Jamestown in 1607, as depicted in this 19th-century engraving.

## Background

Puritans took their name from their desire to "purify" the English church.

## THINK THROUGH HISTORY

### B. Contrasting

In what ways did the colonies at Jamestown and Massachusetts Bay differ?

their attention to the Americas. In 1609, Henry Hudson, an Englishman in the service of the Netherlands, sailed west. He was searching for a northwest sea route to Asia. Hudson did not find a route. He did, however, explore three waterways near present-day New York that were later named for him—the Hudson River, Hudson Bay, and Hudson Strait.

The Dutch claimed the region along these waterways. They established a fur trade with the Iroquois Indians. They also built trading posts along the Hudson River at Fort Orange (now Albany) and on Manhattan Island, at the mouth of the river. Dutch merchants quickly formed the Dutch West India Company. In 1621, the Dutch government granted the company permission to colonize the region and expand the thriving fur trade. The Dutch holdings in North America became known as **New Netherland**.

Although the Dutch company profited from its fur trade, it was slow to attract Dutch colonists. To encourage settlers to come and stay, the colony opened its doors to a variety of peoples. Gradually, more Dutch, as well as Germans, French, Scandinavians, and other Europeans settled the area. The colony's population was so ethnically diverse that one visitor called it a great “confusion of tongues.” The Dutch reputation for religious tolerance also drew people of many faiths, including Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, and Jews.

#### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

**C. Contrasting**  
How were the Dutch and French colonies different from the English colonies in North America?

**Colonizing the Caribbean** During the 1600s, the nations of Europe also colonized the Caribbean. The French seized control of several Caribbean islands, including present-day Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. The English settled Barbados and Jamaica. In 1634, the Dutch captured what are now the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba from Spain.

On these islands, the Europeans built huge tobacco and sugar plantations. These products, although profitable, demanded a large and steady supply of free labor. Enslaved Africans eventually would supply this labor.

## The Fight for North America

As they expanded their settlements in North America, the nations of France, England, and the Netherlands battled each other for colonial supremacy. After years of skirmishes and war, the English gained control of much of the continent.

**The English Oust the Dutch** To the English, New Netherland had become a “Dutch wedge” separating its northern and southern colonies. In 1664, the English king, Charles II, granted his brother, the Duke of York, permission to drive out the Dutch. When the duke's fleet arrived at New Netherland, the Dutch surrendered without firing a shot. The Duke of York claimed the colony for England and renamed it New York.

With the Dutch gone, the English continued to colonize the Atlantic coast of North America. By 1750, about 1.3 million English settlers lived in 13 colonies stretching from New Hampshire to Georgia.

**England Battles France** The English soon became hungry for more land to suit their growing colonial population. So they pushed further west into the continent. By doing so, however, they collided with France's North American holdings. France and England, long-time enemies, had brought their dislike for one another with them to North America. As their colonies expanded, they began to interfere with each other. It seemed that a major conflict was on the horizon.

That conflict began in 1754. That year a dispute over land claims in the Ohio Valley led to a war between the British and French on the North American continent. The conflict became known as

#### Background

In 1707, England united with Scotland to become the United Kingdom of Great Britain.



### SPOTLIGHT ON

#### Pirates

The battle for colonial supremacy occurred not only on land, but also on the sea. Acting on behalf of their government, privately owned armed ships, known as privateers, attacked merchant ships of enemy nations and sank or robbed them.

Also patrolling the high seas were pirates. Unlike privateers, pirates were not licensed by any country. They attacked ships for their gold and did not care what nation the vessels represented. Pirates were ruthless men who did not hesitate to kill for treasure.

One of the most well-known pirates was Edward B. Teach, whose prominent beard earned him the nickname Blackbeard (above). According to one account, Blackbeard attempted to frighten his victims by sticking “lighted matches under his hat, which appeared on both sides of his face and eyes, naturally fierce and wild. . . .”





### GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- Region** Which nation claimed the largest area of the present-day United States in 1754?
- Place** How did Britain's North American empire change after 1763?

#### Background

The name French and Indian War was the colonists' name for the war. The French and many Indians were allied against the British and the colonists.

the **French and Indian War**. The war became part of a larger conflict known as the Seven Years' War. Britain and France—along with their European allies—also battled for territorial and colonial supremacy in Europe and the West Indies.

In North America, the British colonists, with the help of the British Army, defeated the French in 1763. The French surrendered most of their colonial holdings on the continent. As a result of the French and Indian War, the British seized control of nearly the entire eastern half of North America.

## Native American Reaction

As in Mexico and South America, the arrival of Europeans in the present-day United States had a great impact on Native Americans. European colonization brought mostly disaster for the lands' original inhabitants, as many fell to disease and warfare.

**A Strained Relationship** French and Dutch settlers developed a mostly cooperative relationship with the Native Americans. This was due mainly to the mutual benefits of the fur trade. Native Americans did most of the trapping and then traded the furs to the French for such items as guns, hatchets, mirrors, and beads. The Dutch also cooperated with Native Americans in an effort to establish a fur-trading enterprise.

The groups, however, did not live together in complete harmony. Dutch settlers engaged in fighting with various Native American groups over land claims and trading rights. In 1643, for example, the Dutch and Wappinger tribe fought a bloody battle in which hundreds died. For the most part, however, the French and Dutch colonists lived together peacefully with their North American hosts.

The same could not be said of the English. Early relations between English settlers and Native Americans were cooperative. However, they quickly worsened—mostly over

#### THINK THROUGH HISTORY

##### D. Analyzing Issues

Why were the Dutch and French able to coexist in relative peace with the Native Americans?

**King Philip's War** was one of the bloodiest battles fought between English colonists and Native Americans. About 600 colonists and 3,000 Indians were killed during the fighting.



the issues of land and religion. Unlike the French and Dutch, the English sought to populate their colonies in North America. This meant pushing the natives off their land. The English colonists seized more and more land for their swelling population—and to grow more tobacco. As a result, tensions between the two groups rose.

Misunderstandings over religion also heightened tensions. The English settlers, particularly the Puritans, considered Native Americans heathens—people without a faith. Over time, many Puritans viewed Native Americans as agents of the devil and as a threat to their godly society. For their part, Native Americans developed a similarly hard view toward the white invaders.

**Settlers and Native Americans Battle** The hostility between the English settlers and Native Americans led to warfare. As early as 1622, the Powhatan tribe attacked

colonial villages around Jamestown and killed about 350 settlers. The colonists eventually struck back and massacred hundreds of Powhatan.

One of the bloodiest battles colonists and Native Americans waged was known as King Philip's War. It began in 1675 when the Native American ruler **Metacomb** (also known as King Philip) led an attack on 52 colonial villages throughout Massachusetts. In the months that followed, both sides massacred hundreds of victims. After a year of fierce fighting, the colonists defeated the natives. Throughout the 17th century, many more smaller skirmishes erupted throughout North America. While the Native Americans fought fiercely, they were no match for the colonists' rifles and cannons.

**Natives Fall to Disease** More destructive than the Europeans' weapons were their diseases. Like the Spanish in Central and South America, the Europeans who settled North America brought with them several diseases. And just as had happened in Mexico and Peru, the diseases devastated the native population in North America.

In 1616, for example, an epidemic of smallpox ravaged Native Americans living along the New England coast. The population of one tribe, the Massachusett, dropped from 24,000 to 750 by 1631. Thousands of other natives throughout the region also perished.

"They died on heapes, as they lay in their houses," observed one eyewitness. From South Carolina to Missouri, nearly whole tribes fell to smallpox, measles, and other diseases.

Throughout the Americas, the loss of native life due to disease was incredible. One of the effects of this loss was a severe shortage of labor in the colonies. In order to meet their growing labor needs, European colonists from South America to North America soon turned to another group: Africans, whom they would enslave by the millions.

## THINK THROUGH HISTORY

### E. Identifying

**Problems** Why did the issues of land and religion cause such strife between the Native Americans and English settlers?

### Background

To celebrate their victory over Metacomb, the Puritans cut off his head and displayed it at Plymouth for many years.