

ENGLISH MOTIVES FOR COLONIZATION

English leaders for a long time and for various reasons had advocated the founding of colonies in America. The defeat of the Spanish Armada and experience gained from the failure of Raleigh paved the way for success.

ECONOMIC MOTIVES

Economic considerations were undoubtedly the most effective in promoting colonization. 1) Among these was the accumulation of surplus capital and the profit motive. Wealthy businessmen sought opportunities to invest their money. Joint-stock companies sold shares of stock to venturers and enabled them to share the great expense and risk of founding colonies as business enterprises. 2) The prevailing economic theory of mercantilism stressed the need of a nation to accumulate precious metals – the English hoped to find gold in the colonies. 3) Thus, England wished to secure vital raw materials from her colonies instead of paying precious coin to other countries. 4) The need for markets for England's surplus of manufactures argued for the establishment of captured markets in the form of colonies. 5) Among individual colonists the simple desire to own land, in scarce supply in Europe, and enjoy a better living.

RELIGIOUS MOTIVES

The Protestant Reformation gave rise to dissenting sects who aggressively sought to worship according to their own ideas instead of conforming to the religious uniformity required by the Anglican Church. Non-conforming religious sects were persecuted as being treasonous to the king. These people sought to escape to America where vacant land and great distance from the mother country offered them a place to settle and follow their own consciences in religious matters.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOTIVES

1) The enclosure movement, taking land out of cultivation and converting it into pastureland for sheep, was creating a surplus population. Sheep raising, more profitable than traditional agriculture, required less laborers. The new lands in America gave these unemployed a place to work. Also, a surplus was occurring in the upper-classes as second and third born sons were looking for work since the England was not at war. 2) The desire for adventure – opportunity and new experiences – moved others to go to America. 3) Related to a desire for religious freedom was the wish of some opposed to the monarchy for a greater degree of political freedom than they had in England. 4) The English government also wanted to weaken Spain by establishing military and naval outposts.

THE COLONY OF VIRGINIA

King James I in 1606 chartered the Virginia Company. This company was composed of two subsidiary groups, the London Company and the Plymouth Company. The London Company succeeded in settling the first permanent English settlement in what was to become the United States when, in 1607, the colony of Jamestown was founded in Virginia.

EARLY DIFFICULTIES AT JAMESTOWN

In the spring of 1607 three vessels brought 105 colonists to establish the Jamestown colony on a low peninsula in the James River. The ultimate success of the colony was not assured for several years; disease and starvation brought death to a large majority of settlers of the first few years but new colonists replaced the losses.

The great sufferings of the colony were due to: 1) the choice of a swampy malarial location, 2) a lack of incentive to individual industriousness since all members shared in the company profits regardless of how hard they worked, 3) simple ignorance of how to cope with their environment and how to use the abundance it offered, 4) unsuitability of the colonists for the labor required of them – many were gentlemen

or were unambitious, 5) poor management by the council members, 6) wasting time searching for gold and a passage to the Pacific, and 7) hostility of the Native Americans. Only the forceful leadership and common sense of the adventurer, Captain John Smith (Pocahontas myth, who was only 12 years old), who was soon made “president” of the colony, saved it from complete failure.

LEADING EVENTS OF EARLY VIRGINIA

The ultimate success of the colony was assured in 1612 when John Rolfe introduced the cultivation of tobacco to Virginia, which soon became the most superior tobacco in the world and the demand for it was high. Because of the huge profits available, the joint-stock company was dissolved in 1616 and land was granted to private owners to give the colonists more incentive to produce. In 1619 the first legislature was created to police the colonists and protect them. Because of the huge profits, the crown dissolved the Virginia Company and made the colony a royal colony, which gave the colonists even more protection, but forced them to surrender some of their profits to the King.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW ENGLAND COLONY

The religious motive is often emphasized as the predominant one in the migration to New England, but economic motives were just as strong.

THE PLYMOUTH COLONY

The Pilgrims who settled at Plymouth were a group of separatists from the town of Scrooby. The Separatists believed in complete independence of each congregation and strongly opposed the authority of the Anglican Church. They first migrated to Holland but, not wanting their children to become Dutch, secured a patent from the Virginia Company to settle in Virginia. They secured the financial support of a joint-stock company of London merchants. The Pilgrims were skilled navigators and farmers. However, on the *Mayflower* the Pilgrims were a minority.

Because of their skill at navigation, the Pilgrims moved the ship off its course to Virginia (it was NOT a storm). When the rest of the people on the boat found out they were going to land outside the bounds of Virginia, they protested. For two weeks the *Mayflower* set off the coast until an agreement was reached for the two sides. In exchange for giving in to the Pilgrims demand of not going to Virginia, the rest of the people were guaranteed a government that would be ruled by the majority. The signing of the Mayflower Compact ended the feud and the settlers came ashore in New England.

Many of the non-Pilgrims on the ship immediately set out to plant tobacco for trade. The Pilgrims began settling and planting crops for supplies for the coming winter. When the tobacco did not grow on the rocky soil, the non-Pilgrims had a problem. The Pilgrims demanded that the others convert to their religion before they could receive food. After the first winter, the Pilgrims found themselves to be in the majority. In 1621 they secured possession of the land in a patent from the King. The Pilgrims did not have much problems with the Indian because of the rapid death of the Indian from exposure to European disease. As the Indian died, the settlers would move onto land already cultivated by the Indian (they were very THANK(sgiving)FULL). Also, many of the colonists engaged in a profitable fur trade.

THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY COLONY

The Bay Colony was much larger and of more importance in the founding of New England than Plymouth. It originated as a commercial (fishing) venture but was later populated by thousands of Puritan (Pilgrim) refugees who settled the land to become farmers, but soon turned to other things such as shipping because of the lack of good soil for farming. Towns quickly began to form around Boston, especially from 1630 to 1640 during the “Great Migration” when 25,000 Puritans came to Massachusetts to escape persecution of the Anglican Church under the rule of Charles I.

Although the Massachusetts government was heavily influenced by the Puritan clergy, it was not an official theocracy, as the clergy were not elected to public office. However, only members of the church were permitted to vote and participate in government. According to colonies charter the “freemen” – of whom there were only 12 in 1630 – were to choose the court of assistance to the governor. The base of the government was broadened in the fall of 1630 when 109 members of the church won the right to become

“freemen.” There was little protest because all of the colonist believed they were “virtually represented” by the church’s leadership.

THE FORMATION OF RHODE ISLAND

This colony south of Boston resulted from a classic example of religious intolerance by the Puritans. The leader in the founding of Rhode Island was Roger Williams. Williams advocated separation of state because he feared that the church, composed only of the elect, would be contaminated by even the slightest involvement in civil affairs. Williams believed it would be the civil affairs that would corrupt the clergy, not the clergy corrupting the civil affairs. Most damaging to Williams in Massachusetts, however, was his belief that land could only be acquired from the Indian by honest purchase.

Williams was expelled from the Bay Colony in 1635 and settled Providence in 1639. Continuing Williams’s ideas was Anne Hutchinson, who was expelled from Boston in 1637. With some of her followers, she settled Portsmouth in 1638, near Providence. However, these new settlements were not any more tolerant than those in Massachusetts. In 1639 Newport was founded when a group led by William Coddington was expelled from Portsmouth. In 1643, Samuel Gorton was expelled from Providence for disagreeing over the idea of a tax to support the church.

In 1644, the King granted Williams a royal charter making Rhode Island an official colony of Great Britain.