Colonial Contrasts

New England Colonies

The geography of the New England Colonies was very mountainous. The coastline is rugged with many bays. The soil is very rocky, which makes farming difficult. However, there are many large trees that grew well in this climate with snowy cold winters and short cool summers.

In terms of politics in New England, only men met at town meetings to pass laws. This was the most direct form of democracy found in the early colonies.

Middle Colonies

The economy of the New England colonies was dependent on the sea. The large trees that grew well in this area were used for shipbuilding. There were many ports and harbors for fishing and whaling. Smaller forest animals provided furs. Due to the rocky soil, and the difficulty of farming, many people turned to trading the natural resources found in this area.

The geography of the middle colonies is made up of many harbors, bays, and rivers. The soil here is much richer and great for farming. The land is mainly plains with mountains and hills. The climate is moderate with mild winters and summers.

The biggest educational milestone in the New England colonies was when the first public schools started in 1647 in Massachusetts. This trend later spread to other New England colonies.

The economy of this area is made up of many farms, especially grain growing. As a result there are many mills that were used to process the
grains. In addition, there are many ironworks, along with ports for fishing and trade.

In terms of education, there were no public schools in the middle colonies. Most children were educated at home or at schools ran by churches.

The political system of the middle colonies was made up of white male property owners that elected assemblies. The assemblies passed the law and voted on taxes.

Southern Colonies

Agriculture played a key role in the economy of the southern colonies. There were large plantations and many smaller farms. Key crops in this area were tobacco, rice, indigo, and cotton. Slaves did the majority of the work on the southern plantations and farms.

There were no public schools in the southern colonies. There were also very few private schools. Private tutors taught the white children on plantations, while slave children were forbidden to learn. Parents in the backcountry taught children at home.

The geography of the southern colonies is made up curving coastlines with bays and harbors, along with coastal plains and piedmonts. The climate in this area allows for a long growing season. The summers are very hot and humid and the level of precipitation is high.

King-appointed governors dominated the politics of the southern colonies. Like James Ogilthorpe who founded the Georgia colony as a refuge for debtors.