

Summary: The Southern Colonies

Virginia

In 1607, Virginia became the first permanent English colony. Early settlers started plantations. Plantation owners grew rich by growing and selling tobacco and rice. Many workers were enslaved Africans. Early settlers built their plantations on the best farmland near the ocean. Later, settlers moved inland.

In 1619, Virginia became the first colony to have an elected legislature. This assembly was called the House of Burgesses. Colonists elected the burgesses. Only white men who owned land could vote or be elected. Most of them belonged to the Anglican Church. In 1632, the legislature made this church the official church of Virginia. People who were not Anglican had to leave the colony.

New Colonies in the South

England settled four more colonies in the South: Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Maryland began in 1632 when King Charles I gave land to a Catholic named Cecilius Calvert. Calvert wanted Maryland to be a refuge for Catholics. In 1649, Maryland passed the Toleration Act. This law promised that all Christians could worship freely.

In 1663, King Charles II formed a colony south of Virginia. France and Spain claimed this area. The king hoped that an English settlement would keep the French and Spanish away. The settlement was called Carolina. Later it was divided into North Carolina and South Carolina. South Carolina had good farmland and harbors. North Carolina did not.

In 1732, King George II gave land to James Oglethorpe. Oglethorpe formed Georgia as a place for English debtors. Oglethorpe made strict rules for the colonists. Later, these rules changed. In time, Georgia became a rich plantation colony.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

plantation *noun*, a large farm on which crops are raised by workers who live on the farm

legislature *noun*, a group of people with the power to make and change laws

refuge *noun*, a safe place

debtor *noun*, a person who owes money



After You Read

REVIEW Who were burgesses? Underline the sentence that says who could be elected as burgesses.

REVIEW What were differences between North Carolina and South Carolina? Circle two things that South Carolina had that North Carolina did not have.