

The Middle Colonies Economy

Lesson

3

Time

1600

1750

1750
New York City becomes the second-busiest port in the English Colonies



WHAT TO KNOW

How did geography affect the economy of the Middle Colonies?

VOCABULARY

prosperity p. 242

artisan p. 244

apprentice p. 244

PLACES

Philadelphia

Hudson River

Delaware River



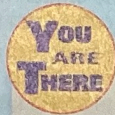
SUMMARIZE

Key Facts

Summary

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Busy Farms and Seaports



The year is 1700. You are in a market in **Philadelphia**, surrounded by a busy crowd of farmers and merchants hoping to sell their crops.

You are very happy that your family decided to move to the Middle Colonies. The soil is very fertile and your farm produces many crops. You come to the market often to sell and trade. And your family has much more land than they ever did in England!



Rich Farmlands

When settlers came to the Middle Colonies, they were amazed by the richness of the land and all of its natural resources. Unlike New England, the Middle Colonies had plenty of fertile soil. Since most people made their living by farming, the Middle Colonies attracted many settlers.

Richard Frame used poetry to express his feelings about the rich land in the Middle Colonies. He wrote:

1 “The fields, most beautiful, yield such crops of wheat, And other things most excellent to eat.”

Crops, Livestock, and Trade

Wheat fields stretched all across the Middle Colonies. Wheat, corn, and rye

were the main crops, but colonists also used the land in other ways. Dairy cows ate the thick grasses. Pigs ran through the forests, eating acorns and berries.

Farmers in the Middle Colonies traveled to market towns to sell or trade their livestock and crops. Every market town had a gristmill, which ground grain into flour. Most towns also had a lumber mill. During visits to market towns, farm families shopped at the general store. They bought things they could not make or grow themselves, such as iron tools, shoes, paint, and buttons.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

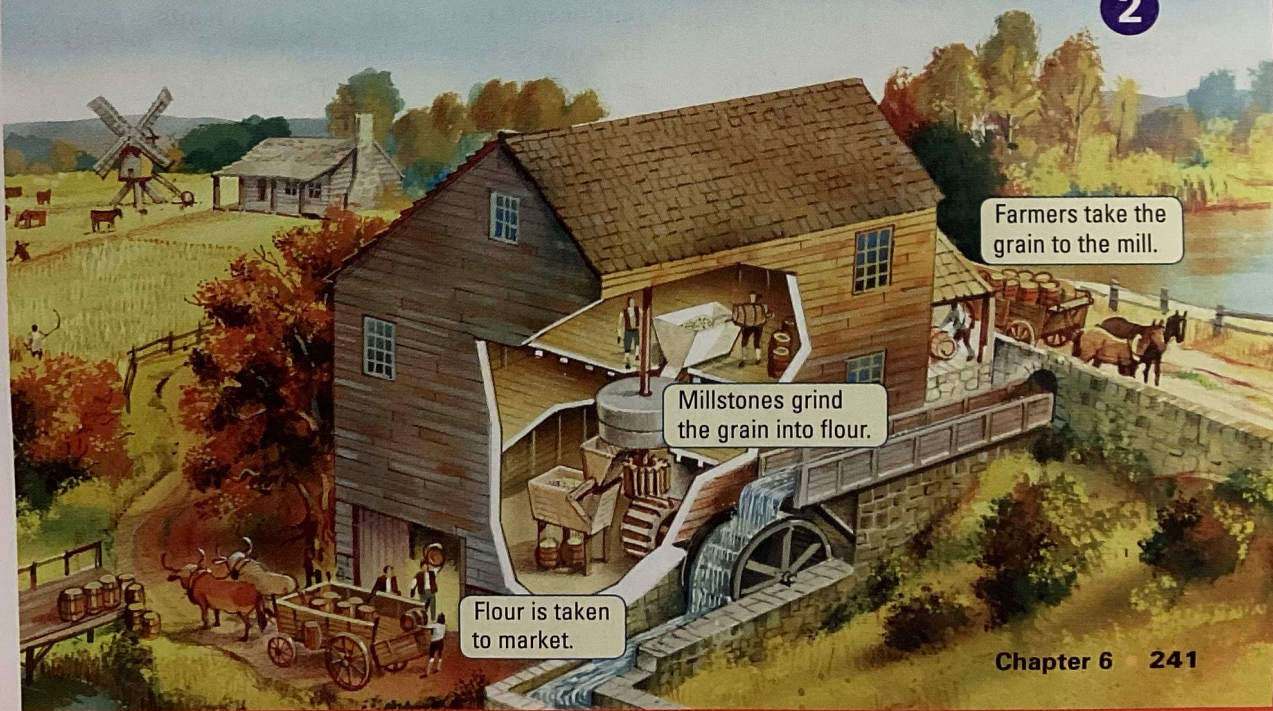
How did geography affect the economy of the Middle Colonies? Rich land helped farmers prosper.



A Gristmill

ILLUSTRATION Gristmills ground harvested grain into flour. How did the flour get to market?

2



Port Cities

The merchants who bought livestock and crops from farmers took these goods to port cities. These were major trade centers in the Middle Colonies. The colonies' **prosperity**, or economic success, depended largely on the ports.

3 New York City

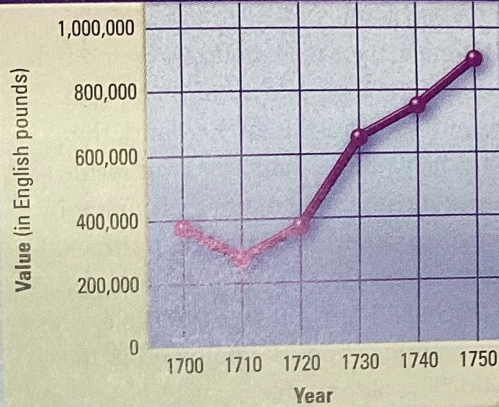
New York City was one of the most important port cities. The **Hudson River** helped make trade easier. Farmers, fur traders, and lumber workers could float their goods down the river to New York City. Also, the port's harbor along the East River was a good place for ships to dock.

Every year, the number of ships sailing into and out of New York City grew. When the English took over in 1664, about 35 ships used the port each year. By 1750, that number had grown to 600. New York City had become the second-busiest port in the English colonies.

Philadelphia

The busiest port was Philadelphia. The city was built along the **Delaware River**.

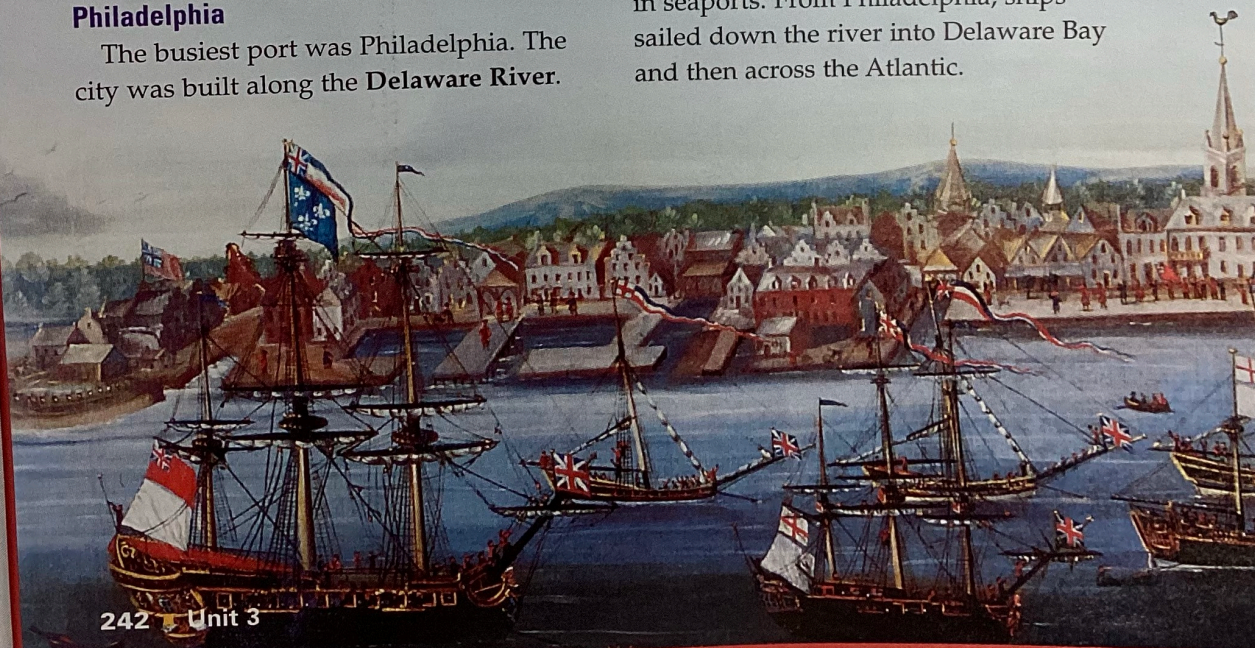
Colonial Exports to England, 1700–1750



GRAPH The value of colonial exports is given in English money, or pounds. In what year did the colonies export the highest value of goods?

Many people moved to Philadelphia because of the port.

Farmers, merchants, and traders in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware relied on the Philadelphia port. They sent goods down the Delaware River to the port or took their crops to the merchants in seaports. From Philadelphia, ships sailed down the river into Delaware Bay and then across the Atlantic.



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► **ENGLISH GOODS** Watches, silver trays, and mugs were shipped from England to the colonies. These goods entered the colonies through port cities, such as New York City (below).

Exports and Imports

Colonial port cities were busy places. The streets were full of sailors and, at times, even pirates. Shopworkers made ropes, sails, and barrels. Shipbuilders hammered ships together. Merchants talked over prices as dockhands moved goods. For many immigrants, their first view of North America was a port city.

As in New England, almost all trade in the Middle Colonies was with England or with other English colonies. New England and the Middle Colonies exported

many of the same goods, including furs, salted meat, and lumber. Yet the Middle Colonies exported more wheat and grains. They led the colonies in flour exports.

Most imports to the Middle Colonies came from England. Ships brought furniture, tea, gunpowder, medicines, and metals. Some ships carried enslaved Africans. Most of these people were made to work as craftworkers or servants.

READING CHECK SUMMARIZE

Why were New York City and Philadelphia good locations for ports? They were located on rivers.

7



Colonial Jobs

Immigrants arriving in the Middle Colonies could choose from many different jobs. In addition to farming and shipping, many colonists worked in skilled trades such as ironworking. Many of these **artisans**, or craftworkers, came to the colonies as indentured servants.

Making Goods

Most artisans used raw materials to make goods. Blacksmiths used iron to form horseshoes and tools. Coopers made barrels out of wood. Carpenters used wood to build houses and ships. Bricklayers worked with stone and clay to pave streets and raise buildings.

8 Some artisans depended on farm goods. They included bakers, butchers,

flour millers, and soap makers. Dress-makers and tailors used wool, linen, and cotton to make clothing. Tanners turned animal skins into leather, which cobblers used to make shoes.

Learning a Trade

A few young colonists in rich families went to college to become lawyers, bankers, or ministers. However, the skills needed by artisans, such as carpenters and tanners, were not taught in schools.

Instead, young people learned their skills by becoming apprentices. An **apprentice** lived and worked with an artisan and his family for several years to learn a skill. He could then go on to earn a living as a journeyman and later a master. These professions were practiced by men.

Children IN HISTORY

9 Benjamin Franklin

Hundreds of colonial boys became apprentices. Benjamin Franklin was one of them. By the age of 10, he was working for his father as a soap maker in Boston. When Franklin's father noticed that he liked to read books more than make soap, he arranged for Franklin to work in his brother's print shop.

Franklin helped write pamphlets, set type, and even sell newspapers on the street. When he was 17 years old, Franklin left the shop and moved to Philadelphia to open his own printing business.

Make It Relevant What kind of job would you want if you were an apprentice?



10

Women and girls had fewer chances to work outside the home. In the 1600s and 1700s, most women were not allowed to own property or businesses. In most cases, when a woman got married, her husband became the owner of everything she had.

Sometimes, if a woman's husband died, she would take over his business. Throughout the colonies, some widows ran taverns, printing businesses, and silversmith shops.

READING CHECK **SUMMARIZE**

How did people learn to be artisans?
They first served as apprentices.

Summary

The rich land, wide rivers, and large harbors of the Middle Colonies all led to economic success. The region's economy also depended on its many farmers, artisans, merchants, and sailors.



► **CANDLEMAKERS** were called **chandlers**. Candles were made from **tallow**, which is animal fat.

REVIEW

- 1. WHAT TO KNOW** How did geography affect the economy of the Middle Colonies?
- 2. VOCABULARY** How are the terms **artisan** and **apprentice** related?
- 3. ECONOMICS** What jobs were most enslaved Africans forced to do in the Middle Colonies?
- 4. CRITICAL THINKING** What were the advantages and disadvantages of being an apprentice?
- 5. MAKE A CHART** Make a two-column chart that lists colonial jobs and the products made by people who worked at these jobs.

- 6. FOCUS SKILL SUMMARIZE** On a separate sheet of paper, copy and complete this graphic organizer.

Key Facts

The Middle Colonies had rich farmland.

Many settlers came to the Middle Colonies.

Summary

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