

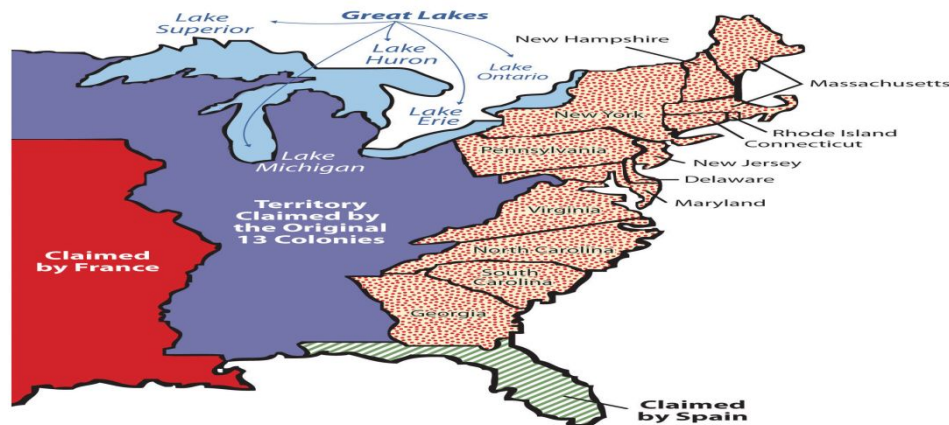
Thirteen American Colonies



The **Thirteen Colonies** were a group of [British colonies](#) on the east coast of [North America](#) founded in the 17th and 18th centuries that [declared independence](#) in 1776 and formed the [United States](#). The thirteen were: [Delaware](#), [Pennsylvania](#), [New Jersey](#), [Georgia](#), [Connecticut](#), [Massachusetts Bay](#), [Maryland](#), [South Carolina](#), [New Hampshire](#), [Virginia](#), [New York](#), [North Carolina](#), and [Rhode Island and Providence Plantations](#).



The Thirteen Colonies had very similar political, constitutional, and legal systems, and were dominated by Protestant English-speakers. They were part of Britain's possessions in the [New World](#), which also included colonies in present-day [Canada](#) and the [Caribbean](#), as well as [East](#) and [West Florida](#). In the 18th century, the British government operated its colonies under a policy of [mercantilism](#), in which the central government administered its possessions for the economic benefit of the mother country. However, the Thirteen Colonies had a high degree of self-government and active local elections



In the 1750s, the colonies began collaborating with each other instead of dealing directly with Britain. These inter-colonial activities cultivated a sense of shared American identity and led to calls for protection of the colonists' "[Rights as Englishmen](#)", especially the principle of "[no taxation without representation](#)". Grievances with the British government led to the [American Revolution](#), in which the colonies established a [Continental Congress](#) and declared independence in 1776.



Each of the thirteen colonies developed its own system of limited local self-government under an appointed royal [governor](#), derived from the English system of [common law](#) and composed largely of independent farmers who owned their own land, voted for their local and provincial government, and served on local juries. Colonial decisions were subject to approval by the governor and the home government. There were also substantial populations of African slaves in some of the colonies, especially Virginia, the Carolinas, and



The names of the colonies were chosen by the founders and proprietors, subject to royal approval, and given in the founding [charters](#). Nine of the thirteen chose to include in their names the term "Province of...", which had no political significance. Later residents tended to drop the ambiguous terminology, as in the map shown in the article [Province of New Jersey](#), which is labeled simply "East Jersey" and "West Jersey".



Following a [series of protests over taxes](#) in the 1760s and 1770s, these thirteen colonies united politically and militarily in opposition to the British government and fought the [American Revolutionary War](#) (1775–1783). In July 1776, they formed a new nation called the "United States of America" [and declared independence](#). The new nation achieved that goal by winning the American Revolutionary War with the aid of France, the Netherlands, and Spain.^[2] The [American flag](#) features thirteen horizontal stripes which represent these original thirteen colonies.

