5.1: Introduction

The years between 1640 and 1660 were ones of chaos in England. It was in this period that a king, Charles I, was beheaded, and England converted into a republic under the leadership of the Puritan Oliver Cromwell. No new colonies were founded during this time, though immigrants continued to move to already-established colonies. When the son of Charles I, Charles II, was “restored” to the throne, he brought with him an interest in colonization as well as an elaborate court life and fiscal excesses. Between his succession to the throne in 1660 and his death in 1685, Charles rewarded those who had been loyal to him and to his father by bestowing upon them grants of land in the Americas. During his reign, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Carolina were founded as proprietary colonies. Most of the North American colonies, including Virginia, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maine, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware were proprietary for at least part of their existence.

Proprietary colonies were not unlike the fiefdoms of the Middle Ages in that the proprietors were the ultimate sources of authority in their respective colonies, controlling all actions and institutions of government. In the early eighteenth century, Georgia, the last colony to be established, was under the control of a Board of Trustees; the trustees envisioned the colony both as a buffer between Spanish Florida and the Carolinas and a refuge for English debtors. By the early eighteenth century, many of the colonies, including those granted to the proprietors, had become Royal Colonies, under the direct control of the English Crown.

5.1.1: Learning Outcomes

learning outcomes

After completing this chapter, you should be able to:
• Analyze the developments in England between the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and the overthrow of James II in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and explain why anti-Catholic sentiment played a role in seventeenth-century England.

• Explain and analyze the founding and development of the middle colonies, including the motives for settlement and the experience of the colonists.

• Examine the foundation of the colony of Georgia and explain the ways in which its founding and purpose differed from that of most other colonies.

• Analyze the motives of those who founded the Carolina colony and explain the positions of the Lords Proprietors.