

c. Religious settlements in the Middle Colonies

Broadly speaking we define this group as Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland. As there is considerable diversity in these we will treat 'em one at a time in broadly arranged paragraphs.

(1) New York (New Amsterdam)

The charter for the colony was given in 1621 and by 1623 the Dutch West India Company had occupied the broad territory around the mouth of the Hudson. The claims had been founded by the voyages of Henry Hudson and the Dutch, controlling a sea empire much out of proportion to the little Netherlands, had been arguing for a colony for many years. 1626 saw Peter Minuit buy Manhattan from the Indians... (It must be noted some place that the Indian nations in general did not understand "land sales" and it seems plain today that the Indians who made the sale to Minuit were not really property holders of Manhattan in any proper sense. His trinket purchase apparently went to Indians who had no good grounds for selling it.) But quickly Dutch settlers moved into the Hudson valley... settling as far north as Albany and the Dutch Reformed Church was established in 1629. But while the Dutch held the patents, the merchants invited many others to settle and New Amsterdam quickly became a melting pot of many tongues... most of them irreligious. The first reformed minister, Jonas Michaelius, came in 1628 and found his three year tour of duty almost too much and I suppose the religious settlement of New Amsterdam could better be called the irreligious settlement.

Peter Stuyvesant coming in 1647 saw an attempt at stronger consolidation both governmentally and religiously. Stuyvesant took over the Swedish colony in New Jersey and sought to enforce the Reformed Church establishment. But the cause was lost when the English forced the surrender of the Dutch possessions in 1664 although the Reformed church was permitted to continue as it served its communicants. The English brought the Anglican church and in 1697 Trinity Church was chartered as the first formal Anglican church in New York. But diversity was the rule and even the Jews obtained a reasonable foothold in New York although originally opposed by Stuyvesant. 1754 saw the founding of a college that in 1784 became Columbia college and later Columbia University.

The composite make up of the colony did not help it in Scriptural matters and it is rather uniformly described as a rough and unspiritual territory. Religion seemed to have less to do with the general culture than in any of the other colonies. It was, in fact, almost a factor of no importance.

(2) New Jersey (New Sweden)

Briefly, the colony grew from another of Peter Minuit's expeditions when, sailing under the Swedish flag, he founded Fort Christian near the present site of Wilmington,