

# The Middle Colonies

## Establishing the Middle Colonies

The Dutch and Swedish settled the first middle colony. The Dutch colonists named the colony New Netherland (NETH-uh-land). New York City was called New Amsterdam.

King Charles II of England announced that he wanted to own New Netherland in 1664. He threatened to send soldiers to take it by force. The Dutch and Swedish colonists did not want to fight. They simply gave up the land. The king gave the land to his brother James, the Duke of York. James divided it into New York and New Jersey.

Later William Penn founded the two other middle colonies, Pennsylvania and Delaware.



## William Penn's Woods

William Penn belonged to the Society of Friends, a religious group known as the Quakers. Quakers thought that all people were equal, and they did not believe in fighting. However, the Quakers were disliked in Great Britain, and Penn wanted to leave the country.

Years before, King Charles II had borrowed money from Penn's father. So, Penn asked the king to repay that debt with land in the New World. In 1681, the king granted him Penn's Woods, which is the area now called Pennsylvania. Penn made sure that people had religious freedom in his colony. Members of any religion could vote or be elected to office.

Pennsylvania became the center of colonial America. During the late 1700s, many important historical events occurred in Philadelphia, its capital city.

## Bread Basket Colonies



The middle colonies manufactured iron, which was made into guns, axes, and tools. There were hills with fertile soil, so the people cleared the land for farms. Farmers grew and exported wheat, barley, oats, and livestock to the southern colonies and the British West Indies. Grain was so abundant that people referred to these colonies as the “bread basket” colonies.

Many rivers flowed through this region, which made trading easy for farmers living inland. They shipped goods on boats to the ports of Philadelphia and New York City, where their products were loaded onto sea-going ships.



## Comprehension Question

In what ways did the middle colonies affect the success of the northern and southern colonies?