

# Immigrants in the American Colonies

This text is excerpted from an original work of the Core Knowledge Foundation.

On a pleasant summer day in 1750, a ship carrying four hundred Germans arrived at the docks in Philadelphia. These newcomers were about to begin their new lives in a new place.

Even a hundred years earlier, the arrival of four hundred immigrants was not big news. Back then, many people wanted to start a new life in an English colony. At the time there were five English colonies in North America.

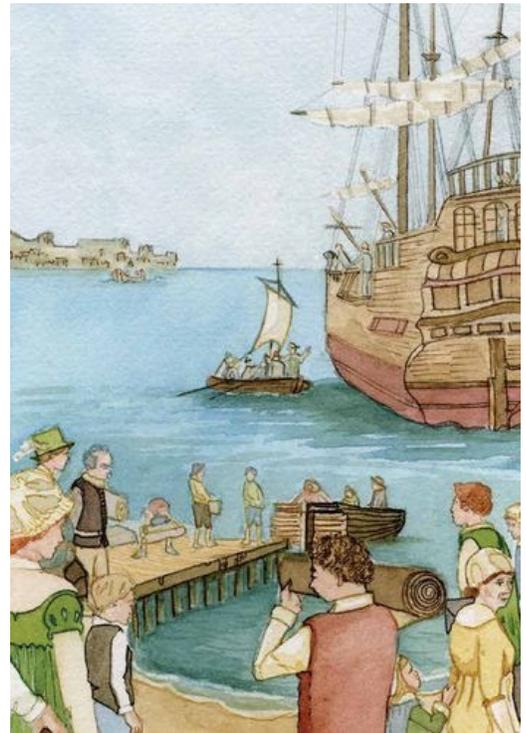
By 1750, there were thirteen English colonies on the East Coast of what became the United States. All of them were strong and growing. Almost every week, a ship arrived with more immigrants. The population of the colonies had already passed one million and was quickly climbing toward two million. Settlements had spread from the Atlantic Ocean to as far west as the Appalachian Mountains.

Why had so many people come to the British colonies in North America? Why were so many still coming in 1750?

The answer is simply opportunity: the opportunity to own land of their own, the opportunity to work in the growing towns and cities, the opportunity to worship as they pleased, the opportunity to escape the past and start a new life.

Who were these colonists? Where were they from? They were mainly ordinary people-farmers and people from small towns. Most colonists were from England, but a large number-almost a third-came from Germany. Many others came from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Sweden, and the Netherlands.

Not all of those who migrated to the colonies traveled willingly. About one person in five was enslaved, having been forcefully removed from his or her home in Africa. Most eventually found themselves in the South, but there were enslaved people in the North, too. Almost none of the people who came from Africa were free.



*Immigrants by the hundreds arrived in the American colonies in the 1700s.*