



Life in the Thirteen Colonies Before 1755

In 1754, Maryland was a colony of Great Britain. People living in Maryland were considered to be English citizens and they were governed by British laws. The colony was ruled by a Royal Governor that reported directly to the King. The colonists depended upon British merchants to supply them with many important items in their daily lives including tools, clothing, furniture and weapons. These goods were sailed across the Atlantic Ocean in large ships and delivered to ports such as Annapolis, Baltimore, Oxford, Cambridge and Chester (now Chestertown). In return, colonial merchants sailed raw materials such as corn, grain, tobacco and lumber to England. Daily life in Maryland in 1754 often centered around activities that took place on the water. Since nearly all trade goods traveled by boat, most of Maryland's homes were located within easy walking distance of a major river. Rivers also provided the colonists with an important source of food. In the spring, striped bass, shad and herring were netted by the thousands as the fish made their annual migrations up the Bay's rivers and streams. The Bay's abundant oyster bars also added a valuable source of protein to the colonists' diets.

One of the greatest benefits to being an English colony was receiving protection from the British military. This was critical because the colonists had no established military of their own. As a result, they lived under the constant threat of invasion by the French and the Spanish, who were struggling with England for control of North America. Without British protection, either one of these world powers could have easily overtaken the colonists and their lands.

In 1755, tensions between England and France led to the beginning of a conflict known as the Seven Years War. From 1755 to 1762, English and French forces battled each other throughout the Ohio Valley and Canada for control over the eastern half of North America. Eventually, the French were driven from their lands and forced to abandon their North American empire. When the war ended in 1763 with a convincing English victory, it also left the country with a very large debt. As a result, King George III decided to raise money by taxing the thirteen colonies. Disagreements over how these taxes were created and enforced would soon change the relationship between England and its thirteen colonies forever.



In the 18th century, most colonists in Maryland lived within easy walking distance of the Chesapeake Bay and its major rivers.



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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

DIRECTIONS: Read the text on the previous page, then answer the following questions in complete sentences. Write your answers on the lines provided.

1. What were some goods brought to the colonies by British merchants?

2. Why was it so important for the colonists to receive protection from the British military?

3. How were the Bay's major rivers important to the colonists of Maryland?

4. How did the Seven Years' War lead to a change in the relationship between England and the thirteen colonies?
