

The New England Way The Puritans set up their ideal society—a religious “commonwealth” of tightly-knit communities. Instead of a church governed by bishops and king, they created self-governing **congregations**. A congregation is a group of people who belong to the same church. Because Puritan congregations were self-governing, their churches came to be called “Congregationalist.” This Congregationalist way of organizing churches became known as “the New England Way.”

Each congregation chose its minister and set up its own town. The town’s most important building was the meetinghouse, where religious services were held. Everyone had to attend these services. The meetinghouse was also used for town meetings, a form of self-government.

Puritan values helped the colonists organize their society and overcome the hardships of colonial life. Puritan colonists valued:

- **hard work** as a way of honoring God. The Puritan work ethic contributed to the colony’s rapid growth and success.
- **education**. Because the Puritans wanted everyone to be able to read the Bible, laws required that all children learn to read.
- **representative government**. Puritans brought their traditions of town meetings and local self-government with them to America.

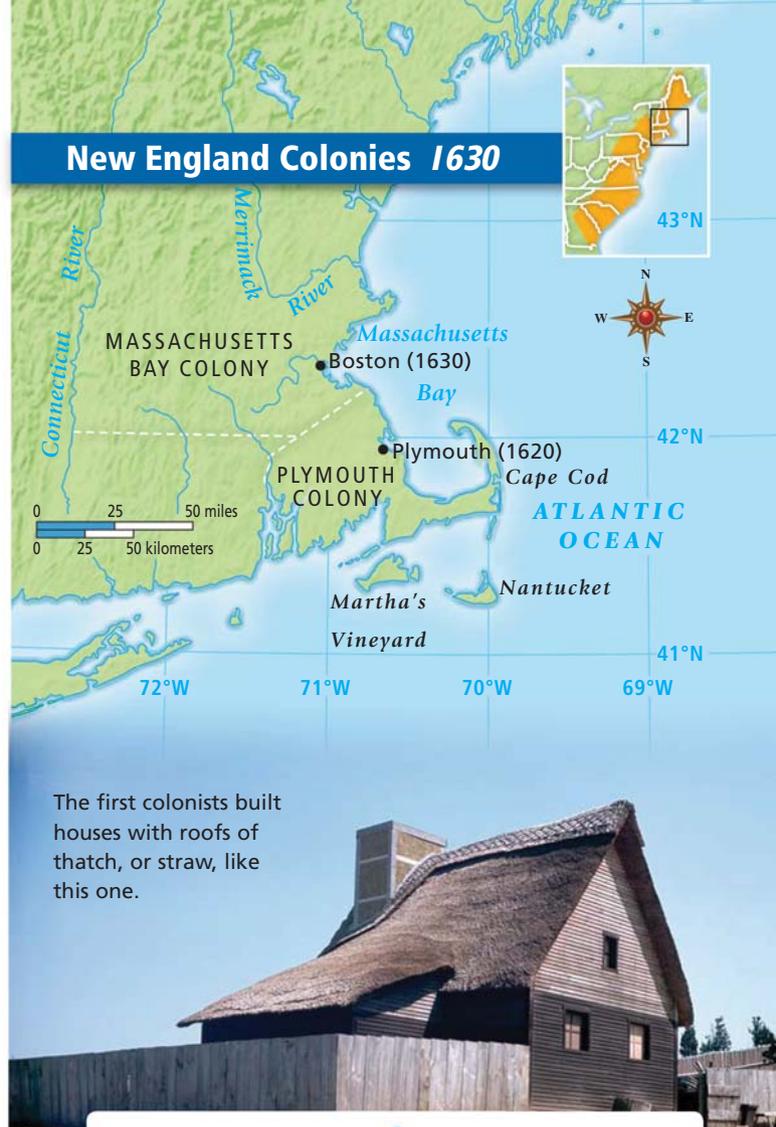
Democratic rights were quickly expanded. The colony’s charter allowed only “freemen” or investors to vote. But when the colonists arrived in America, Winthrop, the colony’s first governor, changed the definition of “freeman” to mean any male church member. Although this covered only a limited number of people, it was a major step in expanding voting rights.

SUMMARIZE Describe the kind of society the Puritans hoped to create.

Massachusetts Bay “Seeds” New England

KEY QUESTION Why did some colonists leave Massachusetts?

The Puritans worked hard to create an orderly society and felt threatened by those who questioned their ways. But dissenters within their ranks soon began challenging Puritan leaders. Disagreements within Massachusetts forced many to leave and found other colonies. In this way, Massachusetts became a “seed colony” out of which other New England colonies grew.



Connect Geography & History

1. **Place** How far is Plymouth from Boston?
2. **Make Inferences** Why do you think that Boston became the most important port in New England?