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# New England: Commerce and Religion

## One American's Story

Like many other New England Puritans, Captain Thomas Smith had grown rich through commerce. In this self-portrait from 1680, he displays his wealthy clothes and surroundings. He was proud of his achievements: the painting includes a scene of a naval battle in which he may have fought. Smith enjoyed his worldly success. But as a Puritan, he was also torn between the joys of this world and the need to prepare for the next. So under the skull appears a religious poem that begins

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“Why why should I the World be minding  
Therein a World of Evils finding.  
Then Farewell World: Farewell thy Jarres [conflicts]  
Thy Joies thy Toies thy Wiles thy Warrs”

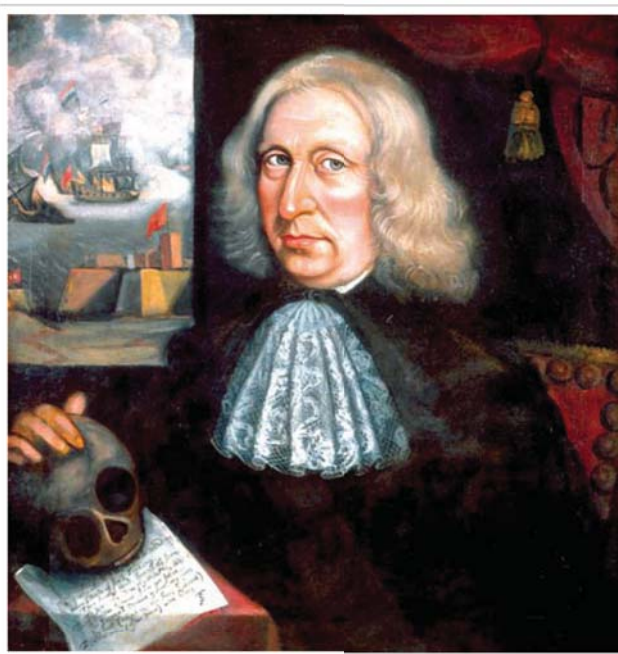
—poem in Captain Thomas Smith's self-portrait

The poem reveals a man who was aware of both the “evils” and the “joys” and “toys” of this world. Like other New Englanders, Captain Smith struggled to balance his religious life with his commercial success.

## The Resources of New England

▼ **KEY QUESTION** Why did England pass the Navigation Acts?

By the 1700s, the colonies formed several distinct regions: New England, the Middle Colonies, the Southern Colonies and the **Backcountry**, which ran through the far western edges of the colonies. Of all the colonial regions, New England was the most populated. Its people grew rich by cleverly exploiting the region's resources.



Captain Thomas Smith  
Self-Portrait, Worcester  
Art Museum