Colonial America

Complete CO5 files from The National Archives, UK, 1606–1822

“This is an indispensable resource for scholars researching the American colonies in the British Empire.”

Prof. Neil York, Brigham Young University

Adam Matthew
Primary sources for teaching and research

A DIGITAL RESOURCE
**Early settlement**

*Colonial America* contains much material on the pioneering English settlements, including:

- Charters and commissions relating to the foundation and government of Virginia, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Maryland and Pennsylvania
- Comprehensive volumes of local legislation running from the colonies’ dates of foundation
- Abstracts of grants of land in New York in the years after the English takeover from the Dutch

**Wars and international relations**

The English found their presence in North America contested with various groups of native inhabitants and with competing European colonisers. Material on this topic includes:

- Major Peter Schuyler’s holograph journal of his expedition to Canada and action against the French at the Battle of La Prairie during King William’s War (1691)
- George Washington’s account of a military mission to French defences on the Ohio river during the French and Indian War (1753–54)
- Reports on prominent Indian figures during Pontiac’s Rebellion (1760–64)

**Migrations and population change**

Non-British settlers arrived in the colonies from all over northern Europe and from elsewhere in North America, enticed by opportunity or driven by war, rival colonialisms or religious persecution. Documents covering migration include:

- Material on the settlement of ‘Palatines’ (Germans) in New York, settled in exchange for their labour in the production of naval stores (1710–12)
- Council proceedings discussing the dispersal of French Protestant refugees (Huguenots) through the English colonies (1693) and grants of land to Huguenot women on the island of St Kitts (1715)
- Acts of the South Carolina assembly relating to Acadians expelled from Nova Scotia (1756)
Institutions, governance and political change
The early colonies were hotbeds of institutional and political experiment, often fuelled by religious belief. Material on these upheavals includes:

- Instructions to Edmund Andros, governor of the short-lived Dominion of New England (1686-89), deposed in the Glorious Revolution
- Pamphlets both supporting and opposing Jacob Leisler, leader of a rebellion against the government of New York (1689-91)
- Correspondence on the ‘Narragansett Country’ or ‘King’s Province’ (Washington County, Rhode Island), subject of a long-running boundary dispute between four colonies from the 1650s to 1726

Trade, finance and taxation
Commercial opportunities in sugar, tobacco, fur and other commodities abounded in the New World; London’s attempts to tax the American colonies was one of the major causes of their efforts to gain independence. Material on these matters includes:

- Shipping returns, listing the details of each ship in colonial ports and the type and amount of goods carried
- Petitions originating in various colonies for and against the continued imposition of the Navigation Acts
- Legal material stemming from the Boston Tea Party (1774-81)

The American Revolution
CO 5 covers the whole period leading up to the efforts by the colonies to break away from Britain. Material on the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods include:

- Relations and negotiations with allied Indian tribes (1776-83)
- Military correspondence between British generals in America and the Secretary of State (1776-84)
- Intercepted Patriot correspondence (1776-83)

‘The Colonial Office files are probably the most important resource for historians interested in early America, the Atlantic world, the Caribbean and the nascent British Empire. Having them digitally accessible for the first time is an important development.’

Dr Tim Lockley, School of Comparative American Studies, University of Warwick

Materials include:
- Letters
- Charters and commissions
- Orders to officials
- Court records
- Land grants and cadastral lists
- Maps and building plans
- Diaries
- Newspapers
- Printed pamphlets, broadsides and speeches
- Texts of acts of assemblies
- Military documents
- Petitions
- Public notices and proclamations
- Financial documents
- Shipping lists
An essential resource for historians and researchers of early America, the Atlantic world, the Caribbean and the British Empire, *Colonial America* enables access to a wealth of manuscript material with full-text search technology.

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*Colonial America* is made up of five modules:

- **Module I:** Early Settlement, Expansion and Rivalries
- **Module II:** Towards Revolution
- **Module III:** The American Revolution
- **Module IV:** Legislation and Politics in the Colonies
- **Module V:** Growth, Trade and Development

**Features**
- Interactive Government Structure Chart
- Data Associations display links, and so illustrate trends, within the material
- Exhibition investigating three copies of the Declaration of Independence
- Essays by leading scholars, exploring and contextualising the material

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