

COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

In the 1600s, all colonies (except Georgia) were owned by companies or wealthy proprietors. But the fact that the king transferred his control of the New World colonies to companies and proprietors did not mean that the colonists in America were completely free of outside control. For example, under the terms of the Virginia Company charter the company had complete authority in running the colony's government. According to the charter, colonists in Virginia would have no more voice in their government than if the king ruled the colony directly.

#1: All colonies except Georgia were originally controlled by what groups?

Still, the colonies considered themselves as having only a loose association with the authorities in London. In large part, this was due to the fact that the Atlantic Ocean separated England and the colonies. Also, the colonists had inherited a long English tradition of struggling for political liberty. For example, colonists borrowed ideas from the Magna Carta, which had set limits on the king's power, as they tried to create representative governments in the colonies.

#2: What effect did the distance between England and the 13 colonies have on their political relationship?

#3: What did colonists borrow from the Magna Carta in creating their own governments?

In 1618, the Virginia Company issued instructions to its appointed governor that free colonists who owned land could elect representatives to join with the governor and an appointed council to create laws for the colony. From then on, it was generally accepted that the colonists had a right to participate in their own government. Thus, charters granted by the king to the Calverts in Maryland, William Penn in Pennsylvania, the proprietors in North and South Carolina, and the proprietors in New Jersey stated that laws should be created with "the consent of the freemen."

#4: What right did most colonial charters give to the colonists?

#5: Who did not have a right to participate in colonial governments?

In New England, for many years, there was even more complete self-government than in the other colonies. Aboard the *Mayflower*, the Pilgrims adopted an agreement called the "Mayflower Compact," to "combine ourselves together into a civil body politic for our better ordering and preservation." In other words, the colony's government would be made up of the colonists themselves.

A similar situation developed in the Massachusetts Bay Company at Boston, which had been given the right to govern itself. At first, the original members of the company who had come to America attempted to rule without input from newer arrivals. But soon these other colonists demanded a

voice in public affairs and threatened to move from the colony if their demands were not met. The company members yielded, and control of the government passed to elected representatives.

#6: What was the "Mayflower Compact" and what did it do?

#7: How were the governments that the Pilgrims and the Massachusetts Bay Colony set up similar?

There were 2 colonies that did not allow for any form of self-government early on. These colonies were New York and Georgia. New York was granted to Charles II's brother (the Duke of York), while Georgia was granted to a group of wealthy "trustees." In both cases colonists demanded representation in the colony's government so insistently that the authorities soon yielded.

In the mid-1600s, the English were too distracted by their Civil War (1642-1649) and its aftermath to pay much attention to the colonies. After King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660, England had more opportunity to focus on running the colonies, but even then the colonies were mostly left to their own devices.

#8: In the mid-1600s, why wasn't England able to govern its colonies very closely?

Yet some attempts were made to place limits on the ability of the colonies to govern themselves. In the 1670s, a royal committee called the Lords of Trade and Plantations worked to enforce England's economic policies in the colonies. In 1685, James II approved a proposal to create a "Dominion of New England" and placed colonies from New Jersey to New Hampshire under its control, thereby tightening his control over the whole region. However, in 1688-1689 another civil war called the Glorious Revolution drew England's attention away from the colonies and England's control over the "Dominion of New England" fell apart.

#9: What was the purpose of the Lords of Trade and Plantations?

#10: Why the English government create the "Dominion of New England"? Why did it fail to achieve its purpose?

By the early 1700s, almost all the colonies had been brought under the direct control of the English king, but under the rules established following the Glorious Revolution. Mostly, this meant that there were limits placed on the king's power.

Yet there continued to be conflict between the English government and its colonies. Colonial governors who were appointed by the king often did not see eye-to-eye with colonial assemblies who were elected by colonists. Conflicts between governors and assemblies made colonial politics unruly and led to increasing tension between England and the 13 colonies.

#11: What was the relationship like between royal governors and colonial assemblies? What does this show about the relationship between England and its colonies?