

How the seeds for later self-government were sown in the early colonies

[History](#)



Introduction

The discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492 led to increasingly greater numbers of European explorers and settlers arriving in the New World to form their colonies there. An economy built on their resources and geography evolved with the growth and development of the American colonies. Similarly, the English principles of self-government took root in their colonies in America, and later in the United States.

Thesis Statement: The purpose of this paper is to investigate how the seeds for the later push for American self-government were sown in the early colonies.

Discussion

The development of self-government in the separate colonies is a reflection of the self-contained economies of each settlement. While New England developed fishing, trade and shipbuilding for their livelihood, the Middle Colonies cultivated their fertile soil and promoted farming. Several businesses and manufacturing units also emerged in this location. The most extensive cities in the colonies were New York and Philadelphia. In the southern region, the cash crops of tobacco and rice were the dominant features of the economy. Enslaved Africans were brought to work on the large plantations of the south, for the triangular trade of the New England colonies.

In England, limited government and representative government were the norms; hence the same was adopted in the various new European colonies in the New World of America. With greater growth of the colonies, they relied increasingly on their own governments to formulate laws that would be

applicable locally within their settlement. Three types of colonies emerged in America by the 1760s: charter colonies, proprietary colonies, and royal colonies. A religious revival known as the Great Awakening occurred in the colonies during the 1730s and 1740s, leading to the development of several new churches. Freedom of religion and democracy contributed significantly to the self-government in colonies. With the evolution of uniquely American culture, there was a great focus on education and the concepts of the Enlightenment. The increased orientation towards education also played a part in the evolution of self-government in the various colonies. Through strengthening their self-government, the colonies aimed to prevent interference from the mother country in their domestic concerns.

The numerous colonial governments received instructions from the Imperial Crown in England that future public affairs in the colonies would be carried out according to the principles of ministerial duties which had been included in the British Constitution after the Revolution of 1688. The promoters of colonial reform had been striving to achieve modification in the mode of colonial administration bestowing the British colonizer's rights to self-government as experienced by their compatriots back home in England. However, the change in policy did not permit a fundamental change in the laws of government by changing the existing monarchical rule for self-government. Lord John Russell was the first to impose the concept of self-government (Goldfield et al, 2008).