

Crime and punishment



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Back in the 1700s, any crime that was committed was to see the likes of either Corporal or Capital punishment, depending on the crime committed.

Capital punishment, or the death penalty, was first established as far back at the 18th century B. C., where death was the punishment for all crimes. These death sentences were carried out by means of crucifixion, drowning, burning alive, or beating to death (Bohm, 1999). By the 16th century, other common methods of execution were boiling alive, hanging, beheading, sawing in half, pressing to death, or burning at the stake. Executions were carried out for offenses such as marrying a Jew, treason, or not confessing to a crime.

Juveniles were even punished by death for burglary, housebreaking, and stealing (Bloody Code, 2011). By the 1700s, little offenses such as cutting down a tree, stealing, robbing a rabbit warren, arson, forgery, unmarried women with a stillborn child, and pickpocketing became reasons for execution. There were as many as 222 crimes punishable for death, but judges quickly reseeded that number by half by the end of the century. Popular crimes though that still saw capital punishment were murderers, raping, adultery, homosexuality, intercourse with animals, and cursing at one's parent (Bohm, 1999).

Many reasons why the death penalty was used so much were because the attitudes of women and men who made the law were unsympathetic. They believed that people who committed the crimes were sinful, lazy, and deserved little mercy. The punishment was also used as protection against the rich, since again the rich were the ones to create the laws.

The law acted as a deterrent, in hopes that people would not commit crimes if known to be punished with death (Bloody Code, 2011). Corporal punishment was more so inflicting pain in public places as a way to also humiliate the offender and to let the public aware of the crime committed. A lot of the times the first letter of the crime committed such as T for theft, was branded on their bodies, marking them forever of their crime. Violators of the law, laziness, drunks, and swearing were often found being punished by pillory, where they would be forced to put their hands and head through a hole and remain there while citizens could laugh or even throw things at them. For ones that gossip, many were either dunked into water, but some had their ears clipped or branded so they could not hear anything to gossip about anymore (Bohm, 1999). The most common forms of punishment were whipping, beating, paling, stoning, etc. for reasons such as stealing, lying, and even prostitution. Bloody Code.

2011. The Bloody Code: Reasons for Death Penalty. Retrieved from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/20711/The-Bloody-Code>.

Bohm, R. 1999. Deathquest: Intro to Theory of Capital Punishment. Anderson Publishing.

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