

Detail the basic features of government in the american colonies. what were the m...

[History](#)



Detail the basic features of government in the American colonies. The thirteen American colonies were a part of the kingdom of Great Britain and as such they had a lot in common with the United Kingdom. While many Americans believe in the doctrine of American exceptionalism, the United States is influenced to a great part by the systems of the England particularly in government.

In the colonies, the governance was simply an incarnation of the English systems. The colonial courts depended upon the common law that was used in England in their judgments and procedure. The Court of the Governor was supposed to be the principal arm that advised the governor of a colony. The legislature was elected by franchise much like the English system which lacked universal suffrage (Murrin 57-9).

The colonies had a council that was comprised of twelve members who were appointed as the governor's principal advisors. This system is similar to the England system of council of ministers all of whom served at the pleasure of the governor and prime minister respectively. Just like in England some of the councilors would be appointed to the council due to their office for instance justice and military heads. Like in England, appointment to the council took into consideration the various interest groups (Ubelohde 45-9). The council performed similar functions to the House of Lords in that its approval was necessary in order for laws originating from the legislature to become law. Unlike in England however, most councilors were not remunerated since they were allowed to continue pursuing their primary professions.

The legislative assembly usually referred to as an Assembly of Freemen was

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elected by free men who had property which was in most instances land. The setting of government policy issues such as taxation and budgeting was a function of the legislature just as was the case in England (Murrin 154-9).

Membership into the legislative assembly was strictly for white men that had property. Since land was abundant and almost every white man had land, most white men had voting rights.

Since the system of government was very similar to the English system, conflicts were just as common. There were many conflicts between the governor and his council and the Assembly of Freemen just like the incessant conflicts between the House of Lords and the Monarchy and the House of Commons in England. The governor just like the monarch had absolute power and authority and could not be impeached. The Assembly of the Freemen, just like the House of Commons with the Magna Carter, also appealed to inalienable rights of all men (Ubelohde 77-83). Like the House of Commons they asserted that the authority that the government has is only held in trust for the governed. The governed thus reserve the right of electing the manner in which they are governed.

While many Americans may consider the United States to be an exceptional country, a study of the existing literature on the subject gives evidence to the contrary. The first colonies had systems of government which heavily borrowed from the English system inn features such as an all powerful governor, a bicameral parliament, use of common law by the courts, lack of universal suffrage and appeals for the inalienable rights of man all of which approximate the United Kingdom government structures.

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