

Colonial Governments of the Thirteen Colonies

There were three types of British colonies: royal, proprietary, and self-governing. Each type had its own characteristics.

- **Royal colonies** were owned by the king.
- **Proprietary colonies**, such as Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, were basically land grants from the British government. Individuals were awarded huge tracts of land that they would then supervise and govern, usually in return for political or financial favors. These colonial governors reported directly to the king.
- **Self-governing colonies**, including Rhode Island and Connecticut, formed when the king granted a charter to a joint-stock company, and the company then set up its own government independent of the crown. The king could revoke the colonial charter at any time and convert a self-governing colony into a royal colony.

Virginia

The origins of Virginia began in 1607 with the founding of Jamestown. The Virginia Company, which had been given the charter to found the colony, set up a General Assembly. In 1624, Virginia became a royal colony when the Virginia Company's charter was revoked. However, the General Assembly stayed in place which helped set a model for representative government in this and other colonies. The first legislature anywhere in the English colonies in America was in Virginia. This was the House of Burgesses, and it first met on July 30, 1619, at a church in Jamestown. Its first order of business was to set a minimum price for the sale of tobacco.

Massachusetts

By royal charter in 1691, Plymouth Colony and Massachusetts Bay Colony were joined together to form the Massachusetts Colony. Plymouth had created its own form of government through the Mayflower Compact. Massachusetts Bay was created by a charter from King Charles I which accidentally allowed the colony to set up their own government. John Winthrop became the governor of the colony. However, the freemen were to have powers that Winthrop kept secret from them until the General Court ruled in 1634 to create a representative legislative body, divided into two houses.

The Mayflower Compact, signed by 41 English colonists on the ship Mayflower on November 11, 1620, was the first written framework of government established in what is now the United States. The compact remained in effect until Plymouth was incorporated into the short-lived Dominion of New England in 1686 and subsequently absorbed into the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1691.

New Hampshire

New Hampshire was created as a proprietary colony. The Council for New England gave the charter to Captain John Mason. Puritans from Massachusetts Bay also helped settle the colony. In fact, for a time the colonies of Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire were joined. The government included a governor, his advisers, and a representative assembly.

Maryland

Maryland was the first proprietary government. George Calvert, the first Baron Baltimore, was a Roman Catholic who was discriminated against in England. He asked for and was granted a charter to found a new colony in North America. Upon his death, his son, the second Baron Baltimore Cecilius Calvert, also called Lord Baltimore, founded Maryland in 1634. He created a government where he made the laws with the consent of the freemen landowners in the colony. A legislative assembly was created to consent to the laws passed by the governor. There were two houses: one of freemen and the second consisted of the governor and his council.

Connecticut

Connecticut colony was founded when individuals left the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1637 to find better land. Thomas Hooker organized the colony to have a means of defense against the Pequot Indians. A representative legislature

was called together. In 1639, the legislature adopted the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. In 1662, Connecticut became a royal colony.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island was created by religious dissenters: Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson. Roger Williams was an outspoken Puritan who believed that church and state should be completely separate. He was ordered to return to England, but instead joined with the Narragansett Indians to found Providence, Rhode Island in 1636. He was able to get a charter for his colony in 1643. It became a royal colony in 1663.

Delaware

James, the Duke of York, gave Delaware to William Penn in 1682 who said that he needed the land to secure his own colony of Pennsylvania. At first the two colonies were joined and shared the same legislative assembly. After 1701, Delaware was given the right to its own assembly. However, both colonies shared the same governor. It was not until 1776 that Delaware was declared separate from Pennsylvania.

North Carolina

North and South Carolina began as one colony called Carolina in the 1660s when King Charles II gave the land to eight lords who had remained loyal to the king while England was in a state of civil war. The two colonies separated in 1719. The lords proprietor were in charge of North Carolina until 1729. At this point, it was named a royal colony.

South Carolina

South Carolina separated from North Carolina in 1719 when it was named a royal colony. Most of the settlements were located in the southern part. The government of the colony was created through the Fundamental Constitution of Carolina favored large land ownership eventually leading to the plantation system. The colony was known for having religious freedom.

New Jersey

The Duke of the York, the future King James II, gave the land between the Hudson and Delaware rivers to two loyal followers, Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkeley. The territory was called Jersey and divided into two parts: East and West Jersey. A large number of diverse settlers settled there. In 1702, the two parts were combined and New Jersey was made a royal colony.

New York

In 1664, King Charles II gave New York as a proprietary colony to The Duke of York, the future King James II. James was quickly able to seize New Amsterdam, a colony founded by the Dutch. He renamed this colony New York. He chose to give citizens a limited form of self government. Ruling powers were given to a governor. In 1685, New York became a royal colony. King James II sent Sir Edmund Andros to be the royal governor. He ruled without a legislature, causing dissension and complaint amongst the citizens.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Colony was a proprietary colony founded when William Penn was awarded a charter by King Charles II in 1681. He set up the colony as one of religious freedom. The government included a representative legislature with popularly elected officials. All taxpaying freemen could vote.

Georgia

Georgia was established in 1732, given to a group of twenty-one trustees by King George II as a buffer colony between Florida and the rest of the English colonies. General James Oglethorpe led the settlement at Savannah as a refuge for the poor and persecuted. In 1753, Georgia became a royal colony, setting up an effective government.