

Module 2: The Constitution

Topic 1 Content: Influence on America

Introduction




Ginger James: I am Ginger James, here with my esteemed colleague, Johnny Englund. We are filling in while Demi Tracy and Glover Mint enjoy a well-deserved break. During tonight's broadcast, we will focus on the substantial influence that English representative government has had on the American government.

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Virginia Company of London Charters



Virginia Company of London Charters

- In the early 1600s, English colonists began settling in North America.
- King James I issued a charter to the Virginia Company of London in 1606.
- It authorized the establishment of a settlement in America.
- The charter guaranteed all of the settlers the "rights of Englishmen," such as land ownership, representation in government, and the right to create a council and make their own laws.
- Settlers in Virginia had rights under the English Petition of Right and the English Bill of Rights.
- Two additional charters were granted to the Virginia Company in 1609 and 1611.

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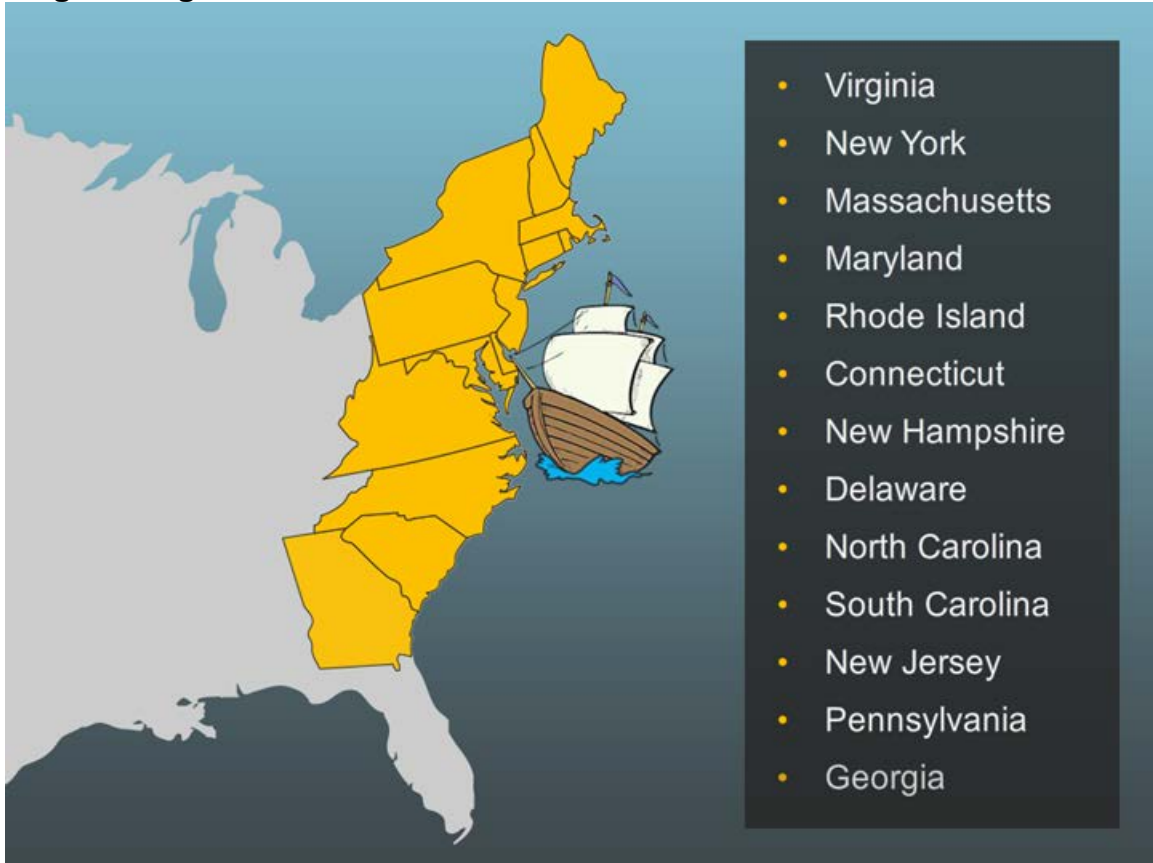
Ginger James: While many Englishmen were fighting in the Glorious Revolution and changing the landscape of government in England, others were journeying off to a New World in search of new opportunities. In the early 1600s, English colonists began settling in North America.

King James I issued a charter to the Virginia Company of London in 1606. The charter authorized the members of the Virginia Company to establish a settlement in America. It guaranteed all of the settlers and their offspring the "rights of Englishmen." Essentially, the settlers in Virginia would enjoy all of the rights of English citizens, just as if they were still living in England. This included the English Petition of Right and the English Bill of Rights, which were drafted after the first Virginia Company of London charter. King James I would go on to grant two additional charters to the Virginia Company in 1609 and 1611.

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Original English Colonies in America



Ginger James: The English continued to settle in the New World, establishing thirteen colonies that we know as:


- Virginia
- New York
- Massachusetts
- Maryland
- Rhode Island
- Connecticut
- New Hampshire
- Delaware
- North Carolina
- South Carolina
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania
- Georgia

The settlers relied on their English political heritage in order to establish governments in these colonies. Johnny, would you mind sharing some information about the colonial governments of Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania?

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Virginia



Virginia


- In 1619, the settlers of Jamestown established a representative government with the House of Burgesses.
- The House of Burgesses was elected by the citizens, and assumed the power to raise taxes and create laws.
- The governor was appointed by the King to oversee the colony.
- The governor had the right to veto any legislation passed by the House of Burgesses.

Johnny Englund: In Jamestown, Virginia, the settlers experimented with representative government through the establishment of the House of Burgesses in 1619. The House of Burgesses was elected by the citizens, and assumed the power to raise taxes and create laws. The governor was appointed by the King to oversee the colony and had the right to veto any legislation passed by the house.

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Massachusetts



Massachusetts

- The Massachusetts colony established the Massachusetts Body of Liberties in 1641.
- This was a code of laws that protected the individual rights of the citizens of Massachusetts.
- It was similar to the English Petition of Right and the English Bill of Rights, granting the right to a trial by jury and the freedom of speech.

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Johnny Englund: The Massachusetts colony established the Massachusetts Body of Liberties in 1641. The Massachusetts Body of Liberties was a code of laws that protected the individual rights of the citizens of Massachusetts. It was similar to the English Petition of Right and the English Bill of Rights, granting the right to a trial by jury and the freedom of speech.

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Pennsylvania



Pennsylvania

- In 1681, William Penn received land from King Charles II, and established the colony of Pennsylvania.
- Pennsylvania's government was derived from English representative government.

William Penn established the Charter of Privileges in 1701.


- It created a unicameral legislature, gave the people the right to elect and assembly, and allowed freedom of religion.
- Governors retained the right to veto laws.

Johnny England: William Penn received a land grant from King Charles II in 1681, and established the colony of Pennsylvania. The government was derived from the representative government in England. William Penn established the Charter of Privileges in Pennsylvania in 1701. The Charter of Privileges established a unicameral legislature, gave the people the right to elect an assembly, and allowed freedom of religion. William Penn, along with future colonial governors, retained the right to veto laws passed by the legislature.

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American Colonial Government Summary



- Most colonial governments had a bicameral legislature and a king-appointed governor.
- The lower house of the legislature was elected by the people.
- The members of the upper house were appointed by the monarch.
- The governor had the power to command militia, appoint officials, and veto laws.
- The legislature had the sole power to tax the colonies.

Ginger James: Thank you Johnny. In summary, near the end of the 1770s, most colonial governments were controlled by a bicameral legislature and a king-appointed governor. The lower house of the legislature was elected by the people, like the House of Commons in England. Similar to the House of Lords in England, the members of the upper house were appointed by the king or queen and usually consisted of wealthy landowners. The upper house served as the advisors of the governor. The governor had the power to command the militia, appoint officials, and veto any laws passed by the legislature. The legislature had the sole power to tax the colonies.

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End of Episode



Johnny Englund: That concludes our show. We are thankful for the opportunity to fill in for Demi and Glover, and to you for joining us for this episode. This is Johnny Englund and Ginger James, wishing you a pleasant day, America.