

## **Fee System** <sup>[1]</sup>

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by William S. Price Jr., 2006

See also: [Imprisonment for Debt](#) <sup>[2]</sup>; [Arrears](#) <sup>[3]</sup>; [Quitrents](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

The Fee System, involving the collection of money to cover administrative services and pay government officials, was transported to British America virtually intact by arriving [colonists](#) <sup>[5]</sup>. Proprietary officials in North Carolina relied on fees to compensate them for performing functions such as issuing documents. With the codification of North Carolina law in 1715, fees were set for all provincial and local officials-from governor to deputy marshal. The services covered included surveying land, clearing incoming and outgoing vessels at ports, and issuing writs, warrants, and licenses.

With the advent of royal government, public resentment over fees increased steadily as more efficient government led to the more efficient collection of all revenues. From the first royal governor to the last, clashes between executive and legislative branches over fee rates and methods of payment were a persistent feature of the struggle for power that characterized colonial politics. Government officials realized much of their income from fees. Excessive fee charges by local officials in the [backcountry](#) <sup>[6]</sup> were a major grievance of the [Regulators](#) <sup>[7]</sup> in the 1760s, and at the Fifth [Provincial Congress](#) <sup>[8]</sup> in 1776 delegates from [Mecklenburg](#) <sup>[9]</sup> and [Orange Counties](#) <sup>[10]</sup> (former Regulator strongholds) were instructed to seek lower rates. In 1777 the North Carolina legislature enacted a fee law modeled on the principal colonial act of 1748 but with stiffer penalties for abuse.

Although the establishment of a salary structure for officials generally replaced the fee system in the nineteenth century, vestiges of it remain as payment for the services of various court officers, county officials, and others.

### **References:**

Jack P. Greene, *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (1963).

William S. Price Jr., "The Fee System in Colonial North Carolina" (M.A. thesis, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1969).

### **Subjects:**

[American Revolution \(1763-1789\)](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Colonial period \(1600-1763\)](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

[Law and legal history](#) <sup>[13]</sup>

[Precolonial period \(pre-1600\)](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

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### **From:**

[Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.](#) <sup>[16]</sup>

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