Chapter 2
Roots of American Democracy

Section 1: Our English Heritage
In the 1600’s, when English people began settling in “New England”, they brought with them a history of limited & representative government.

Limited government = Gov. is NOT all powerful

Representative government = people elect government leaders to make laws and govern on their behalf.
Monarch – a king or queen

Nobles also had power.

Nobles were landowners who paid taxes and promised their loyalty to the crown.

1199 – King John treated the nobles harshly.

King John was one of the more controversial monarchs of Medieval England.

Buried in Worcester Cathedral, England
Nobles (land owners) rebelled! They forced King John to sign the …

**Magna Carta!!**

*Latin for “Great Charter”*

Protected the nobles’ privileges and upheld their authority.

Granted certain rights to all landholders. These rights eventually came to apply for all English people.

Rights??

• equal treatment under the law
  • trial by one’s peers

Magna Carta limited the power of the monarch by guaranteeing that NO ONE would be above the law!! (Not the king or queen! NO ONE)
Henry met with nobles and church officials regularly. The group grew in size and power. Soon included representatives of the common people.

Late 1300’s the group developed into a legislature known as Parliament.

Legislature = lawmaking body

Good for the next few centuries until in 1688 Parliament removed......
King Henry III

Henry III rebuilt Westminster Abbey. It was as a traditional place of coronation and came to be the burial sites for English Monarchs. He built it as the setting for his own tomb.

It’s name is The Collegiate Church of St. Peter. But, it is almost always referred to as Westminster Abbey.
King James II

Removed from throne and his daughter and her husband were chosen by Parliament to rule!

There was NO fighting when King James was overthrown. **This peaceful transfer of power became known as the GLORIOUS REVOLUTION!**
GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

Parliament demonstrated that IT was stronger than the monarch!

It changed the idea of government in England.

No ruler ever would have more power than the legislature (lawmakers).

Parliament drew up the English Bill of Rights to clarify what the monarch could and could not do.
English Bill of Rights of 1689

Stated: The monarch could not –

✓ suspend Parliament’s laws
✓ create special courts
✓ Impose taxes
✓ Raise an army without Parliaments consent

It declared Parliament members would be –

➢ freely elected
➢ guaranteed free speech during meetings

Every citizen would have the right to a fair trial by jury in court cases.

Cruel and unusual punishment would be banned.
Precedent
A ruling in an earlier case that was similar.

A system of courts arose due to the Bill of Rights. The courts’ decisions became the basis of a body of law.

When judges were asked to decide a case, they would look for a ruling in an earlier case similar to this one. They would use the ruling from the previous case as a basis for the punishment for this case. The judge would be consistent in his ruling.

Common Law
This system of law is known as COMMON LAW – it is based on precedent and customs.

The decisions rest with the courts to decide how to uphold the laws made by the lawmakers.

NOT planned!! But, works GREAT!! Still used TODAY! America’s laws about property, contracts, and personal injury are based on English common law!
1600s – 1700s England established colonies in America

Early colonists lived far far from England but remained loyal to England’s king and Parliament. They accepted common law, believed that the ruler was NOT above the law, and expected to have a voice in government and other basic rights.

Jamestown 1st permanent English settlement in America. Founded 1607

King James I signed a charter with the Virginia Company to grant land and authority to set up colonial government.

At first it was managed by governor and council appointed by the Virginia Company.

Colony – a group of people in one place who are ruled by a parent country elsewhere.
1619
2 representatives from each county to meet with the governor and his council. These 22 men were called BURGESSES and formed the House of Burgesses.

1st representative assembly (or legislature) in English colonies!

Beginning of self-government in colonial America!

Little power.
1620 - Pilgrims

They disagreed with the religious teachings of the Church of England. In fact, the Pilgrims were members of a group of people called Separatists. These people had different beliefs than the rest of the English people.

So the Pilgrims left England, in search of a safe place to practice their religion. They chose to go to Holland and found a home. They remained there for 12 years.

Many of them were forced to work difficult jobs all day long, for little money. They had found religious peace in Holland, but they were making barely enough money to survive. What to do?

They finally decided to sail to North America. They didn’t want to join the Jamestown colony, founded in 1607, because they feared that the English people there would treat them badly because of their religious beliefs. So the Pilgrims settled on the northern part of the Virginia Territory, at the mouth of the Hudson River (near what is now New York) and named it Plymouth.

Happily, the Pilgrims found businessmen who were willing to give them money in exchange for a share of the profits made in America. The Pilgrims bought a small ship called the Speedwell and sailed back to England. They stayed long enough to get more colonists and a larger ship, the Mayflower. They set sail from Southampton on August 5, 1620.
Before the Mayflower reached America, the Plymouth colonists realized the need for rules to govern themselves when they arrived.

They drew up a written plan for government.

41 men aboard signed the

**MAYFLOWER COMPACT.**

(A compact is an agreement, or contract, among a group of people.)

The Mayflower Compact stated that the government would make “just and equal laws for the good of the colony.”
Mayflower Compact

• **Set up a direct democracy** (still seen in New England today!!)

• All men would vote

• **Majority rules**

• Had town meetings to discuss and vote on important issues (still seen in New England today!)
King Charles I canceled the Virginia Company’s charter making Virginia a “royal colony” controlled by the crown.

King appointed a new governor but allowed the House of Burgesses to remain an elected legislature.
Early Colonial Governments

The success of Jamestown and Plymouth led to other settlements. By 1733, there were 13 English colonies stretching from Massachusetts to Georgia.

Following the examples of the House of Burgesses and the Mayflower Compact, each colony …

• set up its own government.
• had a governor (elected or appointed by the English king.)
• had a legislature (with elected representatives)
Years passed – colonial governments took on more power and responsibilities.

In 1707, England unified (joined) with Scotland and was renamed Great Britain.

So, the king was busy with stuff at home so the colonists became used to taking care of their own stuff in America.

They built roads and towns.

They organized their own churches, schools, hospitals, and fire departments.

Their economy was GREAT and they were comfortable taking care of their own stuff (without the king and Great Britain’s legislature.)
Mercantilism = theory that a country should sell more goods to other countries than it buys.

By mid 1700’s Great Britain began to tighten its grasp on the American colonies.

Colonists were now used to being in charge of themselves.

King George III took the throne in 1760. The British had adopted a policy of mercantilism in which they tried to squeeze as much money as possible out of the American colonies.

Section 2 – The Birth of a Democratic Nation
NATURAL RESOURCES

Cotton

Lumber
1763 French & Indian War

Mohican ‘s are Algonquian Indians fought with the French.
Most of the Iroquois assisted the English against the French. During the American Revolution, many of these people joined with the British against the American colonists.
To cover the costs of the French & Indian War and the costs of ruling over more land, Britain placed steep TAXES on the American colonies, starting with the STAMP ACT of 1765.

This document taxed colonists by having to affix a legal stamp on legal documents and specific goods - deeds, mortgages, liquor, playing cards, and almanacs. (Which of course means that the people selling these items have to charge more for these items to help pay for the steep “Stamp” tax.)
Colonists protested the Stamp Act by BOYCOTTING!

Boycott= refusing to buy British goods.

The boycott of British goods caused the British Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act!!

Repealed=canceled
New Tax Laws

Declaratory Act

Said, “Parliament had the right to tax and make decisions for the American colonists “in all cases.”

Townshend Acts

New taxes on goods imported to the colonies – glass, tea, paper, lead – things the colonists couldn’t make themselves.

Colonists MAD!!!!

Boycotted again!

Relations b/w colonists and Great Britain worsen!
Tea Act

British East India Company didn’t have to pay taxes on their tea and they were allowed to sell it directly to the shopkeepers SO E. India Co. had lower prices giving them an advantage over the colonial merchants.

Colonists block all E. India Co. ships from entering colonial ports. All except.....
... Boston Harbor
Boston Tea Party
This protest – The Boston Tea Party - caused Parliament to pass the . . .
Coercive Acts (Intolerable Acts)

Restricted colonists’ rights

• Right to a trial by jury
• British soldiers were allowed to search and even move into colonists’ homes.

Are the colonists going to stand for this? NO !!
Colonial governments banded together and 12 colonies sent delegates (or representatives) to Philadelphia to discuss their concerns. **Georgia did not send a delegate to the First Continental Congress!**

Establish a political body to represent the American interests.  
Challenge British control!
In response to the Intolerable Act, the colonists formed the First Continental Congress.

Lasted 7 weeks.

Planned to extend the boycott of British goods.

Sent a document to King George III demanding that colonists' rights be restored!

Agreed to meet again if their demands weren't met.

What did King George do?
British troops were sent to **Lexington and Concord** (where the first battles of the Rev. War were fought – in Massachusetts - to fight against the colonists!!

People began talking about why they were still subject of Britain.

**British soldiers were shooting at the colonists. Their own countrymen!!**

**Revolutionary War!**

General George Washington

Commander & Chief of Continental Army
Old North Church / Boston

Robert Newman, climbed the steeple and held high one lanterns as a signal from Paul Revere that the British were marching to Lexington and Concord by sea and not by land. This fateful event ignited the American Revolution.
On April 18, 1775, Revere and William Dawes were sent to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock of British plans to march from Boston to seize patriot military stores at Concord. A signal was established to warn if the British were coming by land or by sea. From the steeple of the Old North Church in Boston, two lanterns would mean the British were coming by sea, and one would mean by land. One lantern was lit. The British were coming by land.

Revere left Boston around 10 PM. Along the road to Lexington, he warned residents that "the British are coming!" He arrived in Lexington around midnight riding a borrowed horse. At 1 AM, Revere, William Dawes, and Dr. Samuel Prescott left for Concord. Revere was captured. Only Prescott got through to Concord.

Revere was released without his horse and returned to Lexington. At Lexington he joined Adams and Hancock and fled into safety in Burlington. Revere returned to rescue valuable papers in Hancock's trunk. When the British arrived on April 19, the minutemen were waiting for them.
Thomas Paine wrote an article named...  

**Common Sense**  
A pamphlet published by Thomas Paine calling for complete independence from Britain. He said it was just common sense to stop following the king.
Second Continental Congress

May 1775, colonial leaders met again in Philadelphia.
Should we become our own independent country?

**YES**
They are shooting at us!
We know how to take care of ourselves!

**NO**
We’d never be able to win against the British army!

Spent months debating.
Gained more support for independence!

Independence = freedom from outside control & self-reliance
In 1776, the majority of the 2nd Continental Congress agreed to break away from Great Britain. Congress was now the acting government for the colonies and appointed a committee to write a document officially announcing the independence of the United States. The men began writing down the reasons for becoming independent of Great Britain. Thomas Jefferson’s draft was voted on as the official Declaration of Independence and explained why the United States of America should be a free nation. It argued that the British government didn’t look after the interest of the colonists and it listed the abuses by King George III and even called him a “Tyrant …unfit to be the ruler of free people.”
The Declaration of Independence

2nd paragraph – Set forth the beliefs about individual rights

Purpose of government – Protect the rights of the people

Government is based on the consent of the people.

People should overthrow any government that disregards the peoples rights.
John Adams – 1st Vice-President, 2nd President

Reading the Declaration of Independence from the second story of Independence Hall.
President of the Second Continental Congress and of the Congress of the Confederation; first Governor of Massachusetts; and **the first person to sign the United States Declaration of Independence.**
John Locke

17th century English philosopher

Published: Second Treatise of Government

saying good government is based on a social contract between the people and the rulers.

People agree to give up some of their freedoms and abide by decisions made by the government.

Government in turn promises to protect the lives, property, and liberty of the people.
The Declaration of Independence was approved and signed by the Second Continental Congress on July 4, 1776.

The English colonies became The United States of America guaranteeing all citizens the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
Section 3: The Nation’s First Government

1776 / New Hampshire – 1st colony to organize as a state & write a detailed plan of government called a constitution!

Each state had created laws through a legislature that was BICAMERAL (divided into 2 parts or houses)

Within 4 years other colonies had followed suit creating similar systems of government.

Each state had a governor!

Each state had judges and courts to interpret laws.

Most had a Bill of Rights:
- Basic freedoms
- Trial by jury
- Protection of personal property
Massachusetts Constitution

1780 – Massachusetts is the last colony to become a state. Their constitution is the only one still in effect today!

Unusual in three ways:

1. Mass. distributed power evenly among the legislature, governor, and courts

2. The governor and courts were given authority to check up on the legislature!

3. It was not created by the legislature. It was created through a special convention of delegates elected for the purpose of writing a constitution. The document was voted on by the citizens of Mass. as well.
States could not raise and maintain an army large enough to match the British army.

There needed to be a single strong army!

**Articles of Confederation 1777**

Confederation = a group of individuals (or individual states) who band together for a common purpose.

Congress detailed a plan to unite the states. The **Articles of the Confederation became the first constitution of the United States of America.**

It established a system of cooperation among the independent states.
Articles of Confederation

Set up a one-house legislature

- where each state had one vote
- Only government body controlling the army
- Dealt with foreign countries on behalf of the states
- Limited powers – WHY???
States were scared to give the national government too much power. They didn’t want to end up like they had been with Great Britain’s government.

The new government could NOT –

- Enforce its laws
- Tax
- Demand money from the states

By 1781 all 13 states had “ratified” (approved) the Articles of Confederation. BUT it had some serious problems!
Weaknesses of the Articles of Confederation

Lack of Power & Money — It couldn’t…
✓ Collect taxes
✓ Regulate trade
✓ Enforce its laws

Lack of Central Government — There was...
✓ No leader to direct government policies
✓ No court system

Rules were TOO Rigid — It had to have the approval of...
✓ 9 states to pass laws
✓ All 13 states to change an article
Revolutionary War

America won!!
BUT, we were in a lot of debt!!
The national government wasn’t allowed to tax so it had borrowed money. Now the states had to tax their people (to get money to pay off the debt) driving farmers and others out of business.

The government was powerless to solve these problems!! Americans feared for their safety and their property because riots were breaking out.
Daniel Shays, a farmer, was in debt due to the high taxes his state was charging trying to make enough money to pay back the money America owed for the Revolutionary War.

Massachusetts threatened to take away his farm (because he couldn’t pay the taxes on it). **Shay led an armed uprising - Shay’s Rebellion** - of about 1,200 Massachusetts farmers on a federal arsenal (where they keep bullets and shells – ammunition for guns).

This was a wake up call that we needed a stronger national government!!

New York
Alabama History

Alabama Constitutions – rewritten 6 times

1819 – Alabama became a state in the Union.

1861 – Alabama leaves the Union and joins the Confederacy.

1865 – Pardon’s participants in the Confederacy and Alabama rejoins the Union.

1868 – Help reconstruct Alabama after the Civil War. This constitution gave African American men the right to vote in Alabama.

1875 – Alabama no longer needed federal aid in governing the state.

1895
Alabama Constitution of 1901 is still in effect TODAY!!!!!

The United States Constitution has been amended 27 times.

The Alabama Constitution of 1901 has been amended over 700 times!!!!!

Most states Constitutions have been amended about 118 times.

Alabama’s Constitution is the longest constitution in the country!
1901 Alabama Constitution

Written with the idea to take away the right to vote to black men and some poor whites. It couldn’t contradict with 15th Amendment to the US Constitution (denying the right to vote on the basis of race) so they worded as “voters had to ‘intelligent’ and ‘virtuous’, they had to be literate, and have good character.”

Weaknesses of the 1901 Alabama Constitution -

It limited self-government.

Weakened the legislature by meeting only every 4 years.

The only way to change the 1901 Alabama Constitution is through amendments. By 1915, there were hundreds of amendments waiting to change the Constitution.
January 17, 2003
Alabama Governor Bob Riley…

named a reform committee to plan the constitutional reform process to make Alabama’s Constitution more effective!

Reform = form again / change / update