Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions [1]

Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions

by Johanna Miller Lewis, 2006

The Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions served as the civil, administrative, and judicial arms of North Carolina county government beginning in the Proprietary period (1663-1729). Staffed by justices of the peace [2] and appointed by the governor [3], the court heard cases in which the amount of litigation was between 40 shillings and 20 pounds, as well as a variety of minor civil and criminal actions. The Court of Pleas and Quarter Sessions played an important role in the daily administration of county life, as it oversaw the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges, and public buildings; the distribution of licenses for ferries, mills, and taverns; and the apportionment and collection of taxes by the sheriff. Justices also acted as an Orphans' Court for the county and supervised the settling of estates. At the close of the colonial period [4], the county Courts of Pleas and Quarter Sessions remained virtually intact, but the state legislature now appointed all officers of the court. Following the Civil War [5], the new state constitution replaced the justices of the peace with a county commissioner form of government in 1868.

References:

Paul M. McCain, "Magistrates Courts in Early North Carolina,"*NCHR* 48 (January 1971).

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Additional Resources:

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Subjects:
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