Freeholders [1]

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Freeholders

by William S. Powell [2], 2006

Freeholders were free persons who owned land. The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina in 1669 [3] required that, among other things, candidates must be freeholders to qualify for office holding and membership in the colonial Assembly. In some cases the requisite minimum amount of land held was 500 acres. In 1681 instructions to the governor [4]from London directed that five freeholders be elected as representatives in the Assembly.

In 1760, in response to some confusion as to the precise definition of the term, the legislature specified that "freeholder" meant a person in actual possession of real estate [5] for his own lifetime. A person in possession of "an estate of Greater Dignity, fifty acres of Land or a Lot in some Town" in the parish for which an election was held would qualify. A would-be voter also had to be 21 years of age.

Additional Resources:

Laws of North Carolina 1760 [6]: Google Books.

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Authors: Powell, William S. [13]
From: Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press. [14]

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