

*Manors*

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THE KING, pretending to hold the land from the Great Proprietor of all the Earth, made grants of large areas to some favorites, who made sub-grants to others; of whom some were designated the Lord of the Manor, with power to rule, establish courts-leet and courts-baron, to govern, control and direct the churches, the religious services, the patronage of every church on the manor, and the disposition of "deodands"—a peculiar perquisite.

The court-leet was held by the steward of the manor for the punishment of petty offenses and the preservation of the peace. He also took view of frank pledge, a pledge of surety for free men; a bond or pledge that he shall be forthcoming to answer every violation of the law.<sup>a</sup>

A court-baron—the court of the baron—or lord of the manor—was incident to every manor, to be held by the steward, for redressing misdemeanors and nuisances therein and for settling disputes among the tenants relating to property.<sup>b</sup>

No new manors were created in England after the prohibition of subinfeudations by statute in 1290.<sup>c</sup>

Subinfeudation under feudal law was the granting to another, on rental, of part of the land held from a superior lord. Feud means land held of a superior on condition of rendering him service.<sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Blackstone Commentaries

<sup>b</sup>Bouvier, Dictionary of Law

<sup>c</sup>Washburn, Real Property

<sup>d</sup>Hedge, Feudal Society

Serfdom disappeared to a large extent in England with the Tudors, but the lordships and manors set up by royal authority and power in the vast forests of America, three and a half centuries after they were prohibited in England, represented the same spirit and possessed cruel powers.

Each of the many manors established in New York and Maryland by British proprietary grants was organized in strict conformity with the principles and theory of the feudal form of government prevailing in Britain, as represented by the crown. The manors were but an intended link in an imperialistic chain binding the province by feudal shackles to the throne of England and designed to halt any movement in the colonies for a more democratic form of government. [100]

The decline of the manor and of feudalism meant only, as someone has said, that exploitation of the subjugated peasants was now carried out by the lords, not through forced labor, but by making serfs into land-rent payers. [55]

While land was granted as manors in New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, and in the form of baronies in South Carolina, it was only in Maryland, and to a limited extent in New York, that they persisted long enough (other than in the exacting of land rent by the land-holder) really to justify the name. These survivals are treated further in the chapters on those colonies.