

A low-angle photograph of the Georgia State Capitol dome, showing the golden dome and the statue of Liberty atop the spire against a blue sky with white clouds.

Georgia Studies

**Unit 3 – Revolution, Statehood,
and Westward Expansion**

**Lesson 3 – Georgia's Constitution
and the Articles of
Confederation**

Study Presentation

Lesson 3 – Georgia's Constitution and the Articles of Confederation

- **ESSENTIAL QUESTION**
 - What led to the evolution of Georgia's government from a royal colony to a constitutional democracy?
 - What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Georgia Constitution of 1777 and the Articles of Confederation?

Georgia's First State Constitution

- About one-third of Georgians remained loyal to Great Britain; they were called loyalists or Tories
- The Whigs (patriots) influenced a state constitution allowing separation of powers and giving citizens rights to agree how they were governed
- **1777 – Georgia Constitution** adopted at Constitutional Convention in Savannah
- Eight counties formed: Burke, Camden, Chatham, Effingham, Glynn, Richmond, Wilkes, and Liberty

The 1777 Georgia Constitution

- The governor's power was limited
- Executive Council (12 legislators) held greatest power
- Council could overrule the governor's decisions
- John Treutlen appointed Georgia's first governor
- Georgia's 1777 Constitution changed in 1789

“T” Chart

Georgia Constitution of 1777

Strengths

- Still have Legislative Branch
- Three Branches
- Three Branches had separate powers
- Established counties – replaced parishes
- Established local (county) governments

Weaknesses

- Legislature Unicameral (one house)
- No “Checks and Balances” – No second house in Legislative Branch
- Governor served only 1 Year
- Executive Branch (Governor) was weak – Couldn’t Veto Laws, grant pardons, “Chief Executive” only by name
- Legislative elected council – had power to veto the Governor
- Three Branches, but the Legislative was more powerful than the others

The Articles of Confederation

- First Constitution of the United States of America
- Went into effect in January 1781, when ratified by Maryland and Virginia

“T” Chart

Articles of Confederation

Strengths

- First written constitution – Articles of Confederation
- Had a Legislature
- Strong State governments

Weaknesses

- Weak central government
- No Executive or Judicial Branch – no one to enforce laws or hear disputes
- Did not allow the central (federal) government to levy (impose) taxes
- Weak Union, feared strong central government
- No “Checks and Balances”
- Central Government did not have taxes, so no military
- Central Government did not print money
- All power lied with the states
- Each state had an equal vote in Congress – regardless of size or population

Constitutional Convention of 1787

- William Few and Abraham Baldwin represented Georgia at the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia; George Washington presided
- U.S. Constitution established three governmental branches: Executive, Legislative, and Judicial
- Each branch could check the power of the other branches (Checks and Balances).
- Senate and House of Representatives established; only three-fifths of slave population would count toward representation

U.S. Constitution

Ratified in 1788

- Georgia was fourth state to ratify (approve) the new Constitution
- Constitution could be amended (changed); first 10 amendments became Bill of Rights
- George Washington became the first President

Postwar Georgia

- Economy in ruin; government provided food basics as farmers tried to reestablish their farms
- Capital moved to Augusta; continued to move west as the population of Georgia expanded westward.
- Georgia delegates met in 1788 and 1789; adopted state constitution (Constitution of 1789) similar to national government, with three branches
- General Assembly was bicameral (two houses), Senate and House of Representatives; appointed governor and judges; controlled spending decisions