

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

1995-96 Oregon Blue Book

Compiled and published by Phil Keisling, Secretary of State

The word county is from the French word "conte," meaning the domain of a count. However, the American county, defined by Webster as "the largest territorial division for local government within a state....," is based on the Anglo-Saxon county of England dating back to about the time of the Norman Conquest. Counties were brought to America by the colonists and were later established in the central and western parts of this country by the pioneers as they moved westward.

1999-2000

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The word county is from the French word "conte," meaning the domain of a count. However, the American county, defined by Webster as "the largest territorial division for local government within a state," is based on the Anglo-Saxon shire, which corresponds to the modern county. Counties were brought to America by the English colonists and were established in the central and western parts of the United States by the pioneers as they moved westward.

Early county governments in Oregon were very limited in the services they provided. Their primary responsibilities were forest and farm-to-market roads, law enforcement, courts, care for the needy and tax collections. In response to demands of a growing population and a more complex society, today's counties provide a wide range of important public services including: public health, mental health, community corrections, juvenile services, criminal prosecution, hospitals, nursing homes, airports, parks, libraries, land-use planning, building regulations, refuse disposal, elections, air-pollution control, veterans services, economic development, urban renewal, public housing, vector control, county fairs, museums, dog control, civil defense and senior services.