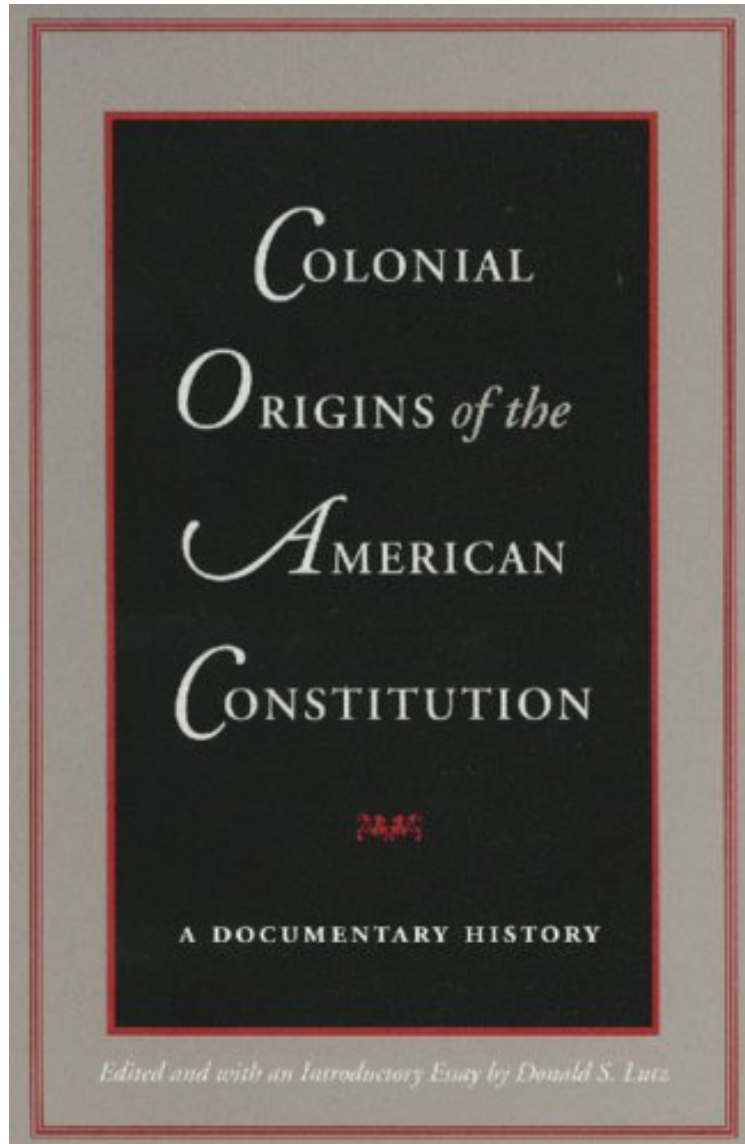


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Colonial Origins of the American Constitution

Donald S. Lutz

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Donald S. Lutz : Colonial Origins of the American Constitution before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Colonial Origins of the American Constitution:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Good foundational reading for the serious history buff By plubius tullius Though challenging at times to read - both because of the period spelling and sometimes complex prose - I give this book a thumbs up for any history buff wanting to understand America in the era leading up to the revolution and establishment of the constitution. Realize this is a compendium of documents and thus don't expect much narrative.

There is some in the form of introductions to each article as well as a detailed preface-introduction; you will need to draw more from study (and discussion if you can read with others) but nothing worthwhile is all that easy! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Colonial Constitutional History By Dr. James T. Mccollum For anyone interested in the constitutional foundations of the United States, this book is a must read. We have the oldest formal constitution in the world, but it didn't come from thin air. British history, culture and law and the necessities of colonial life, thousands of miles from the motherland, were the basis of the precursor documents portrayed in this book. And so, also, our constitution! 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A Top Notch Collection Of Colonial Sources By S. Moss Professor Donald S. Lutz has given us a fine contribution of historical documents from colonial America (1607-1776) with his ~Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History~. These documents trace the foundations of American Constitutionalism from the beginnings of the American colonies to the start of the revolutionary period 1776. American Constitutionalism, according to Lutz, developed out of two distinct traditions that would combine to create a uniquely American Constitutional tradition. The first developing from the top-down structure from England consisting of "charters, letters-patent," and other orders written by the English for the colonists. The second tradition, and the focus of this collection was the set of rules; covenants, compacts, ordinances, codes, etc. written by the colonists themselves that helped spur the movement towards the development of American Constitutionalism. This second tradition and its development did not originate in the outgrowth of 1776 revolution, but was a constant evolution spanning over a hundred years (1607-1776) and Lutz proved this to be the case in the documents provided (only a small sampling, but according to Lutz valuable collection). As another reviewer indicated, the introductory essay by Lutz is a "valuable piece of work" in of itself. There is a good amount of information about the use of language contained in the essay provided by Lutz. He does a good job at explaining/defining various terms like; covenant, compact, constitution, charter, etc. and how those words were used and sometimes interchangeable. The way Lutz analyzed the language during the period in his essay is essential for anyone to understand in context the subsequent documents and I can't place more emphasis on reading/understanding his introductory essay for those who are not familiar with the period and the language used. Overall, this is an exceptional and well organized collection (state by state ending with confederations) of important documents regarding the colonial origins of American Constitutionalism. The book ends with a fine bibliography for those who want to further explore more documents of our colonial past and its influence on American Constitutionalism. As another reviewer stated the only downside is a lack of an index, but still an excellent source.

"Local government in colonial America was the seedbed of American constitutionalism." So begins the introductory essay to this landmark collection of eighty documents created by the American colonists and not English officials that are the genesis of American fundamental law and constitutionalism. Most of these documents, commencing with the Agreement of the Settlers at Exeter in New Hampshire, July 5, 1639, and concluding with Joseph Galloway's Plan of Union, 1774 "the immediate precursor to the Articles of Confederation" have never before been accessible to the general reader or available in a single volume. As Professor Lutz points out, the documents are chosen to make possible "a careful examination of [the American] people's attempt at self-interpretation." All of the principal colonial documents are included, as are all documents attempting to unite the colonies, beginning with the New England Confederation of 1643. Bicameralism, popular sovereignty, the separation of powers, checks and balances, limited government, and religious freedom in sum, the hallmarks of American constitutionalism were first presented to the world in these writings. Donald S. Lutz is Professor of Political Science at the University of Houston.

About the Author Donald S. Lutz is a professor of political philosophy in the department of political science at the University of Houston, where he has been teaching since 1968. He received his Ph.D. from Indiana University. He is the author of eleven books, including *Colonial Origins of the American Constitution: A Documentary History* (1998), *A Preface to American Political Theory*, (1992), and *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* (1988), and numerous articles published in *American Political Science*, *the American Journal of Political Science*, *the Journal of Politics*, *Publius: The Journal of Politics*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *the Annals of Political Science and History*, and *Western Political Quarterly*, among others.