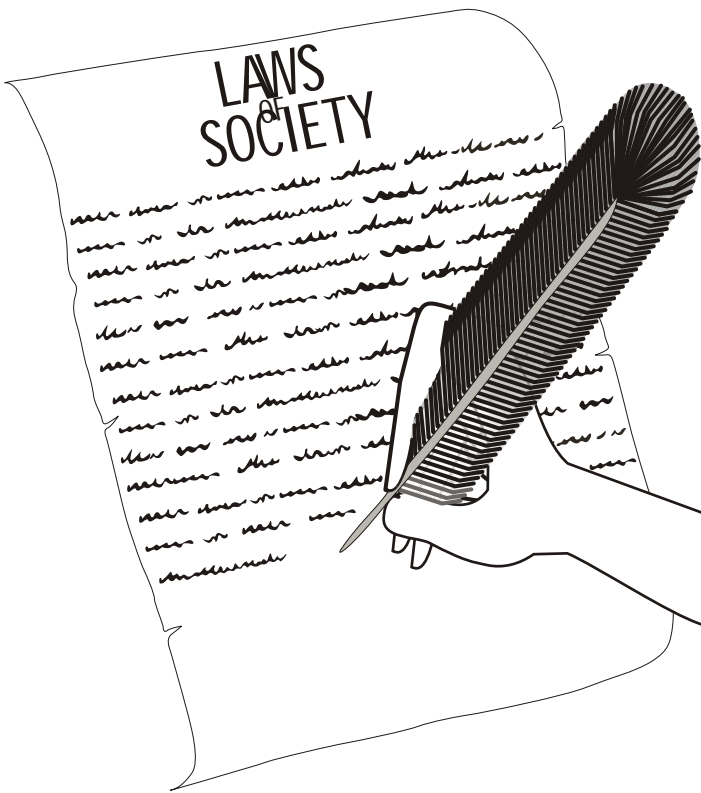




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HISTORY

From where did our constitution come? Was it a completely original document drafted by 55 men at a Constitutional Convention one, hot and stormy summer in 1787, or was it something more?

Since the beginning of recorded time, man has always been an imperfect creature. His relationship with his Maker and his fellow man has at times been in turmoil. The chronicles of our civilization are filled with references to constant struggles for the supremacy over and control of other men. Through history, civilization became a compilation of myriads of governments with laws that failed to provide the structure man needed to exist with a desirable measure of freedom and peace.

However, society continued to muddle through for centuries until eventually, the dawn of the creation of America loomed over the horizon beginning with the Pilgrims. Their migration to a new world would require a new society as well, if man's desires for freedom and peace were to succeed. Indeed, the formative years of this new nation would demand a gargantuan demonstration of innovation to provide a system of laws which would enable a heterogenous collection of people to succeed in their new land. Where would they look for guidance? Past governments had failed. Was it still possible to create an entirely new future?

THE MAGNA CHARTA...FIRST STEP

The Constitution of the United States of America was not exactly a fresh, new idea. As with all other phases of early American history, its origins were deeply ensconced in our English heritage. We must look back to the reign of King John of England, 1167-1216, the youngest son of King Henry II and brother of Richard the Lionhearted. Like his brother, King John was an unpopular king who insisted upon arbitrarily demanding money, land, goods, and services from the common people of England without their consent. He also extended the arbitrary powers of the crown to include areas of civil liberties as well, which was resented by the feudal barons of the time. How could a provincial baron rule his territory if the king could override the local laws of society at any time? This resulted in the drafting of the "Articles of the Barons" and its forced acceptance by the King, on June 15, 1215, in the fields of Runnymede, England. On July 15, 1215, this document formally became part of a collection of documents named the "Magna Charta."

Although this document consisted of sixty-three clauses, the over-riding issues were money and reasonable citizens rights.

Highlights of the Magna Charta

- It freed the Church of England from being controlled by the king.
- It disallowed the assumed right of the king, nobility, or local authorities to deprive subjects of their property without their permission.
- It protected debtors from having their lands and possessions confiscated to satisfy their debts.