

**THE CONNECTICUT
CONSTITUTION. TO THE
PEOPLE OF CONNECTICUT**

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The Connecticut Constitution. To the People of Connecticut by Melbert B. Cary

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MELBERT B. CARY

**THE CONNECTICUT
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PEOPLE OF CONNECTICUT**

To the People of Connecticut

PREFACE

At a time when much is said about the defects of our system of government, and the corrupt tendency so manifest in municipal, state, and national affairs is raising doubts as to the future of Republics, this work, which may be called a study in popular government, as affected by the exigencies of modern politics, is undertaken in the hope that it may tend to strengthen the faith of those who believe in government by the people, and that the people themselves can be depended upon to work for right and justice, whenever they fully understand and appreciate the situation.

A condition of affairs has arisen which is causing many to declare that the people no longer rule in Connecticut; that the equality of man before the law is a myth; that we have drifted far away from the principles laid down by our forefathers in the constitution of 1639, and that the constitutional conditions existing in the State, tend more toward political corruption than in any State in the Union.

It is folly or hypocrisy to say there is no ground for these statements. They are made by loyal and loving sons of the State, who make them with regret and only in the hope that by laying bare the truth a change may become possible.

If by the following words a little impetus be given to the cause of good government, and toward restoring Connecticut to her former position of leadership in the march of constitutional progress, the writer will be satisfied.

WILDFARMS,
RIDGEFIELD, CONN.
July 23, 1900.



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The Connecticut Constitution

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL

GIBBON'S "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" presents no more startling picture of a people who once led the world, fallen from its high estate, than does the history of Connecticut for the past 250 years, when studied with reference to her political development and present status. The comparison at first may seem strong, but it simply emphasizes the lack of intelligent appreciation of the mighty forces which were first set in motion by her early settlers, and the depths of self-stultification which have now been reached.

Almost unconsciously since the early part of the century, and without any such intention or affirmative action, this grand old commonwealth has gradually receded from the proud position of leader and teacher of the whole civilized world in the science of government, until now, among the republics of the world, among the States of this Union, there is none so poor to do her reverence. Government and law were old before Connecticut was known, but the perfect flower

of the science of government is self-government, and the first step toward self-government is the spontaneous and untrammelled adoption by a free people of a fundamental agreement commonly called a constitution.

*a
constitution*

The first authentic occurrence of this kind recorded in history took place within the borders of Connecticut in 1639, when the people of the towns of Windsor, Wethersfield and Hartford, met and adopted a constitution, under which they lived for many years. The nearest approach to similar action prior to this was the Union of Utrecht, which, however, was not the people's action, but was imposed upon the Netherlands republic by the Prince of Orange.

The compact signed on the Mayflower was only an agreement by the Pilgrims to form some kind of a government after they landed, and this document began with the formal acknowledgment of the King as the source of all authority.

So to Connecticut belongs the glory of being the first to take this step, which has been followed by every republic since established in the new and old worlds, and by all the states of the Union.

The constitution of 1639 was as admirable in its details as it was great in its conception. It provided for equal representation in the following words: "They shall send so many deputies as the courte shall judge meete; a reasonable proportion to the number of freemen that are in the said townes." It also provided unequivocally for plurality elections, where it declared that "He that hath the greatest number of papers (votes) shall be governor for that year." It declared for liberty of speech; election by ballot and political equality of mankind.