

Fundamental Constitutions ^[1]

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by John L. Bell, 2006; Revised October 2022.



The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina, by John Locke, 1669. Image from Wikimedia

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^[2]The [Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina](#) ^[3], called the "Grand Model," provided the form of government and society for the [Carolina colony](#) ^[4] from 1669 to 1698. The [Lords Proprietors](#) ^[5] of Carolina first issued the constitutions in 1669, then disseminated revisions in 1670, January 1682, August 1682, and 1698. The constitutions were suspended from 1693 to 1698.

The main purposes of the Fundamental Constitutions were to protect Proprietary interests and to avoid the creation of a democracy. The Proprietors used the constitutions to try to establish a feudal government and society, so far as permitted by the Carolina charter of 1663. The feudal government was to be [headed by nobles](#) ^[6] with the titles of palatine, landgrave, and cacique. They were to rule through their own courts, a grand council, and a Parliament. Freemen were to have a voice in government, but enslaved people and others who were bound were to have none. This government and feudal society were never fully implemented. Only the [palatine's \(Proprietor's\) court](#) ^[7] operated for a time.

References:

Mattie Erma Edwards Parker, ed., *North Carolina Charters and Constitutions, 1578-1698* (1963).

Herbert R. Paschal Jr., "Proprietary North Carolina: A Study in English Colonial Government" (Ph.D. diss., UNC-Chapel Hill, 1961).

Additional Resources:

"The Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina : March 1, 1669" The Avalon Project. Yale Law School. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/nc05.asp ^[8] (accessed October 30, 2012).

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Encyclopedia of North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press.^[15]

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