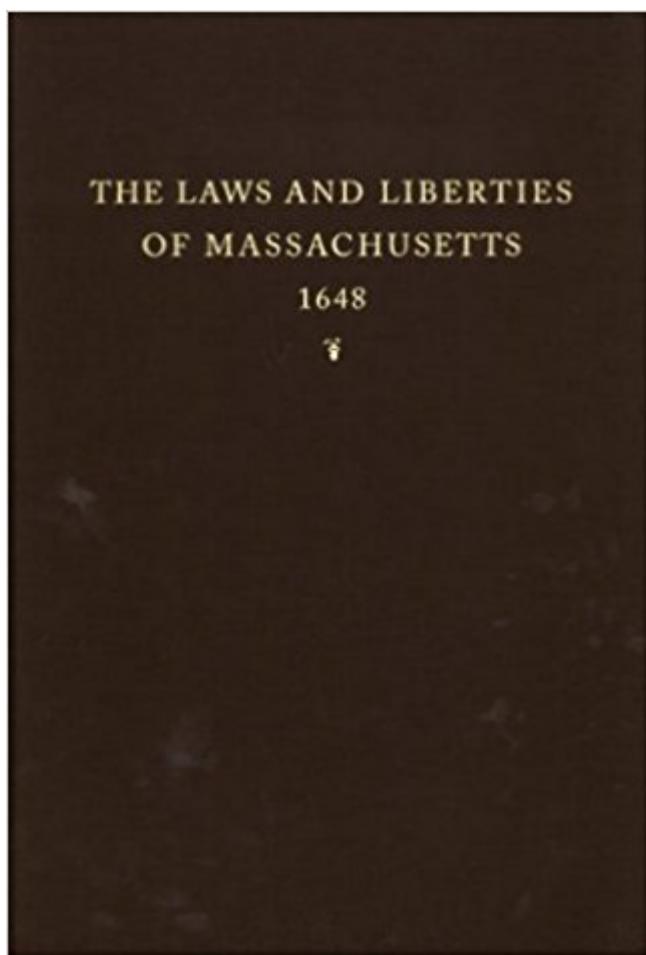


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The Laws And Liberties Of Massachusetts: Reprinted From The Unique Copy Of The 1648 Edition In The Henry E. Huntington Library



Synopsis

The Book of the General Lawes and Libertyes Concerning the Inhabitants of the Massachusetts is the first compilation of laws and constitutional rights printed in English America. Six hundred copies were produced in 1648 and most were given free of charge to magistrates and deputies who sat in the court. When a documentary collection of seventeenth-century Massachusetts laws was published in 1890, not a single copy could be found and it was consequently omitted from the volume. A few years later, one was discovered in England. It was purchased by Henry E. Huntington in 1911. In 1929 the Huntington and Harvard University Press published a line-by-line type facsimile of this unique book. To commemorate the 350th anniversary of this important milestone in the legal history of the United States, the Huntington published in 1998 a limited-edition facsimile of the 1929 volume. Illustrated with a reproduction of two pages from the original volume, the book is printed on fine quality paper with elegant binding and endpapers. An introduction by Professor Richard S. Dunn of the University of Pennsylvania explains the importance of this book to the formation of the American legal system. In addition to its obvious interest for any student of law or colonial history, the subject matter of many of its statutes will give the layman a revealing picture of everyday life in colonial America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Richard Dunn, editor of the papers of John Winthrop, is director of the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania and the Roy F. and Jeannette P. Nichols Professor Emeritus of American History.

but let's get a few facts straight. First, this same volume was published by the Huntington Library in 1975 as full facsimile. Second, the editing of that volume, and the introduction thereto, were by Thomas G. Barnes. Barnes made the same assertion as Dunn: that this volume was the first codification of (British colony) law on this continent. In fact, the earliest codification I find is that of New-Plimoth Colony for 1636, as contained in the 1836 volume The Compact With the Charter and Laws of the Colony of New Plymouth (available in Hein reprint), as edited by William Brigham. Interesting how a narrow expertise can so easily, for lack of research, leave out a fact bearing upon a claim made centrally relevant and given such great import.

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