The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution (The Simon Schuster America Collection)

David O. Stewart
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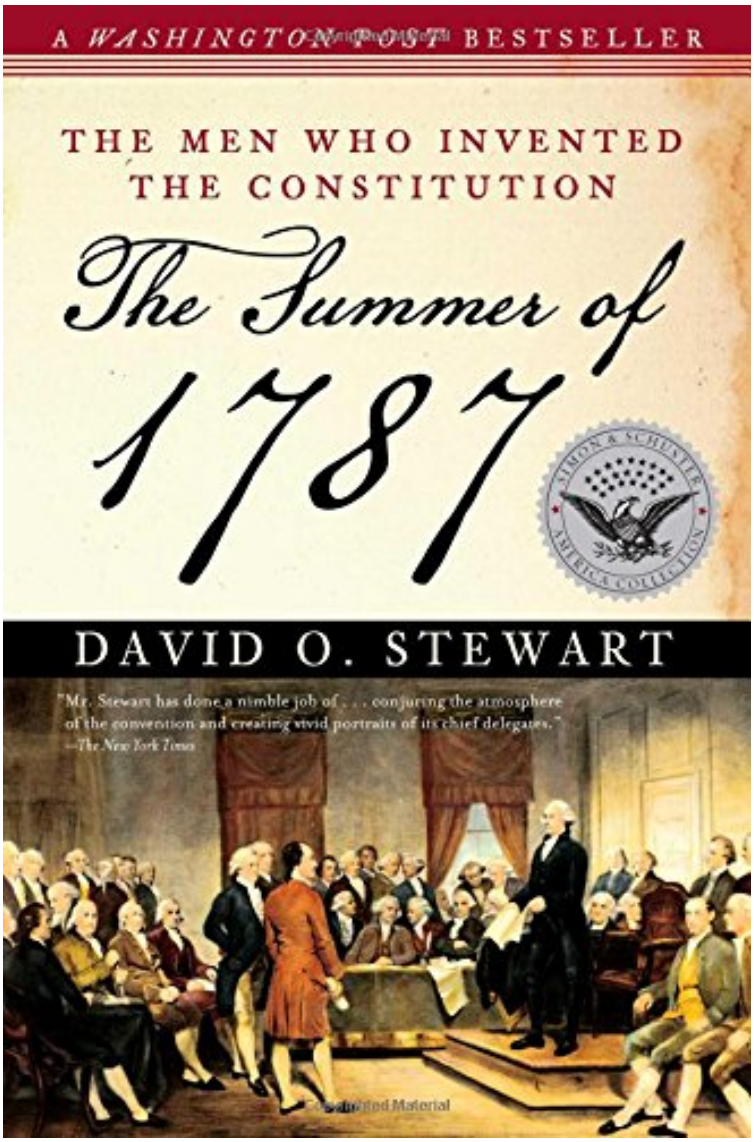

#108324 in Books David O Stewart 2008-05-20 2008-05-20Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.25 x 1.00 x 6.12l, .88 #File Name: 0743286936368 pagesThe Summer of 1787 The Men Who Invented the Constitution | File size: 39.Mb

David O. Stewart : The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution (The Simon Schuster America Collection) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution (The Simon Schuster America Collection):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Timely Book About the Creation the ConstitutionBy Michael LapelosaThis book tells the story of the intrigue, the maneuvering and the compromises that took place in the summer of 1787 resulting in the Constitution: the flawed but enduring document that would define the nation—then and now.The book reads like a novel. I especially enjoyed the portraits that the author drew of the giants of the era; George Washington, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin. However, lesser known , but equally important figures such as Wilson, Sherman and Rutledge are also presented. The narrative takes the reader inside the Philadelphia Convention as the delegates hammered out the charter for the world's first constitutional democracy. The author explains the conflicts and hard bargaining, the passions and contradictions of the process of writing the Constitution.It was a desperate balancing act that required extensive compromises, a fact that appears to be forgotten in today's highly polarized political climate. The requirement that the people have power, needed to be balanced with the order that a stronger central government could provide. The protection of minority rights, the balancing between central and state governments and of course, the disposition of slavery were all issues that were grappled with by the delegates.All this is brought to life through the prose of a masterful author, presented with balance, context and perspective. The result is a highly informative and thoughtful book.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Exemplary Research and WritingBy Alan E. JohnsonThis book is very well researched and very well written. The author neither glorifies the framers nor disparages them. Rather, he mostly lets the facts speak for themselves. Among those facts were the compromises over slavery, including the three-fifths compromise in which a slave (who could not vote) was to be counted as three-fifths of a white person for purposes of apportioning the numbers of Representatives allotted to each state in the House of Representatives. The effects of the three-fifths clause also carried over into the election of the President, since the number of electors for each state in the electoral college was based on the total number of that state's Representatives and Senators. Indeed, one of the reasons for the electoral college was that it would incorporate the three-fifths ratio. A direct popular vote for president, which was supported by James Wilson, James Madison, and a few other delegates, would not have given the South that extra boost in selecting the president.David O. Stewart observes that some sort of compromise over slavery was necessary if a union of all the states was to be formed. However, in the last chapter of his book (pages 261-62), Stewart delineates some of the historical consequences of the compromises embedded in the original Constitution:"Most obviously, preservation of the slave trade meant the continued importation of many thousands of Africans in chains. The Fugitive Slave Clause gave slave owners a critical tool for enforcing their dominion over the people they held in bondage."Though less obvious in its impact, the three-fifths ratio rankled for decades. By granting additional representation based on slaves, that clause enhanced southern power, as reflected in many measures:"• Ten of the first fifteen presidents were slave owners."• John Adams would have won a second term as president but for twelve electoral votes cast for Jefferson (and Burr) that represented southern slaves (counted at three-fifths of their real number)."• For twenty-seven of the nation's first thirty-five years, southerners sat as Speaker of the House of Representatives."• Nineteen of the first thirty-four Supreme Court justices were slaveholders."Because of the three-fifths ratio, Virginia in the 1790s had six more congressmen than did Pennsylvania even though both states had roughly the same number of free inhabitants. The three-fifths ratio gave slave states fourteen extra seats in the House in 1793, twenty-seven additional seats in 1812, and twenty-five added seats in 1833."Those extra votes meant that when crises erupted over slavery in 1820, in 1850, and in 1856, slave owners in positions of power ensured that the political system did not challenge human bondage. House seats created by the three-fifths rule allowed Missouri to be admitted as a slave state in 1820, and ensured enactment of the 1840 gag rule that choked off antislavery petitions to Congress."Stewart explains that "[h]istorians disagree over the terrible bargains that the Convention struck over slavery. Some insist that the delegates did the best they could under the circumstances." However, "[o]thers counter that the northern delegates caved in too easily to implausible southern threats to abandon the Union." Specifically, Georgia and South Carolina, the states that most demanded concessions to slavery, probably could not have survived outside the union as result of their respective dire circumstances. The author concludes that "[f]or all they have been celebrated, the delegates bear responsibility for having entrenched slavery ever deeper, for not even beginning to express disapproval of it." Ibid., 262-63.But Stewart is careful in his examination of the history of the Constitutional Convention. He observes, in more than one place, that the New England states, which benefited economically from the slave trade due to their shipping interests, were more than willing to accommodate Georgia and South Carolina on slavery. Strangely, it was James Madison and George Mason, both slaveholding Virginians, who had the most compunctions about slavery. Although Thomas Jefferson, another slaveholding Virginian, was also on record against this practice, he did not attend the Convention because he was representing the United States in Paris at the time. But although Madison, Mason, and Jefferson were conflicted about slavery, they never (with a few exceptions) actually freed their own slaves. That was the legacy of another Virginian, George Washington, whose Will contained provisions that led to the emancipation of his slaves within two years after his death. Washington was the presiding officer of the Convention. Although he spoke little, he was respected by virtually all of the other delegates.I strongly recommend this book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Beyond Bumper StickersBy Alec HastingsBefore reading The Summer of 1787 I really knew little about the founding of our country. If asked, I would have said a bunch of men met in a stuffy room in Philadelphia (was it a back room?) and did

the deal. They were the "founding fathers." I would have guessed that they were well educated and that they had money and powerful connections. Most importantly, I would have said that they created a brilliant new blueprint for a government that--theoretically, at least--left the ultimate power with the people. This last and most important bit was what I had always been told. Stewart's book showed me that this is a cliche that perpetuates an unthinking patriotism about a document that was both brilliant and flawed, that was the product of ingenious compromise and that was, at the same time, morally compromised. The Summer of 1787 also replaces founding father icons with real people, some worthy of respect and some not so worthy. The major players, the ones debating (and synthesizing the Constitution through debate!) were Washington's one-time friend George Mason, the studious notetaker James Madison, shrewd pro-slavery advocate John Rutledge, Connecticut's canny Roger Sherman, the peg-legged abolitionist Governeur Morris, and a newly-minted Scots-American named James Wilson. No doubt I have missed a few other delegates who made important contributions, but these are the ones who remain in my memory after reading Stewart's history. Knowing that he would become the country's first executive, George Washington moderated the convention debates and, for the most part, wisely restrained from offering his own opinions. Ben Franklin, old and ailing, relied on his fellow Pennsylvania delegate James Wilson to convey occasional but important suggestions to the other delegates. Stewart details the problems the delegates faced during that sweltering summer and tells how they solved them. Most of these problems revolved around creating a government that would share power as equitably as possible between large states and small ones. Since state populations were taken into account in schemes for balancing power, the question of whether slaves could be counted as people became an important one. Counting each slave as three fifths of a human being was a compromise that solved immediate problems and "united" the thirteen states, but it also proved to be one that led to the horror of a civil war and the unrest and division we still experience today. We hear a great deal of rhetoric today about what it means to be an American. For me, it was helpful to read a book that returns to the summer when America was born, to the details of the U.S. Constitution because it is that document and not any car bumper slogan that constitutes who we are. It is not a dead document. It has been changed (amended) multiple times. It is well to remember that as we move forward and to revere those who piloted our ship of state in the early days, but we are now the ones holding the tiller, and we must continue to fine tune the Constitution to fit the needs of a new world.

The Summer of 1787 takes us into the sweltering room in which the founding fathers struggled for four months to produce the Constitution: the flawed but enduring document that would define the nation—then and now.George Washington presided, James Madison kept the notes, Benjamin Franklin offered wisdom and humor at crucial times. The Summer of 1787 traces the struggles within the Philadelphia Convention as the delegates hammered out the charter for the world’s first constitutional democracy. Relying on the words of the delegates themselves to explore the Convention’s sharp conflicts and hard bargaining, David O. Stewart lays out the passions and contradictions of the, often, painful process of writing the Constitution. It was a desperate balancing act. Revolutionary principles required that the people have power, but could the people be trusted? Would a stronger central government leave room for the states? Would the small states accept a Congress in which seats were allotted according to population rather than to each sovereign state? And what of slavery? The supercharged debates over America’s original sin led to the most creative and most disappointing political deals of the Convention. The room was crowded with colorful and passionate characters, some known—Alexander Hamilton, Gouverneur Morris, Edmund Randolph—and others largely forgotten. At different points during that sultry summer, more than half of the delegates threatened to walk out, and some actually did, but Washington’s quiet leadership and the delegates’ inspired compromises held the Convention together. In a country continually arguing over the document’s original intent, it is fascinating to watch these powerful characters struggle toward consensus—often reluctantly—to write a flawed but living and breathing document that could evolve with the nation.

From Publishers WeeklyStarred . Since Catherine Drinker Bowen's Miracle at Philadelphia appeared in 1966, no work has challenged its classic status. Now, Stewart's work does. Briskly written, full of deft characterizations and drama, grounded firmly in the records of the Constitutional Convention and its members' letters, this is a splendid rendering of the document's creation. All the debates are here, as are all the convention's personalities. It detracts nothing from Stewart's lively story to point out that it's just that—a tale—and not an interpretation. Stewart, a constitutional lawyer in Washington, D.C., ignores the recent decades' penetrating scholarship about the Constitution's creation in favor of a fast-paced narrative of a long, hot summer's work. Only one choice mars the book. Stewart, like Bowen, wants us to see the four summer months as the only period when the Constitution was created. But as James Madison and others acknowledged soon afterward, the state ratifying conventions and the First Federal Congress, which added the Bill of Rights, also contributed to the Constitution as we know it. Stewart's excellent book will appeal to those looking for descriptive history at its best, not for a fresh take on the subject. Bw illus. (Apr.) From BooklistThis is, of course, a story that has been told before. But like most great stories, it is worth retelling, especially when told exceedingly well. Stewart, a former

law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell, is a fine writer whose narrative unfolds like a well-structured novel. He begins with a description of the unsettled period just before the convention, as states quarreled with each other and a group of indebted farmers burned courthouses in Massachusetts. He describes the halting moves toward a Constitutional Convention that essentially were launched at a sparsely attended conference at George Washington's home at Mount Vernon. The narrative gathers steam as the convention begins in the sweltering heat of Philadelphia. Here Stewart artfully shows the roles played by the key players as they grappled with issues as varied as the rights of states and the future of slavery. In Stewart's view, the true genius of these founders was their understanding that free, popular government must be based upon compromise. General readers will find this work stimulating. Jay FreemanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Crafting the Constitution was one of the most amazing collaborations in human history. David O. Stewart's book is both a gripping narrative on how it was done and a useful guide to how we should regard that wonderful document today." (Walter Isaacson, author of Benjamin Franklin and Einstein)"David O. Stewart's spirited The Summer of 1787 explores a time when brilliant men -- along with colleagues less acute but often louder -- hammered out the template for the United States of America. With indelible vignettes and anecdotes, Stewart reminds us why those four months in Philadelphia can still shake the world." (A.J. Langguth, author of Union 1812: The Americans Who Fought the Second War of Independence)"David O. Stewart made clearer to me than ever the tensions and bargains that produced our Constitution at the Convention of 1787. Especially the bargain over slavery, with all its terrible, lasting consequences. It is an irresistible drama." (Anthony Lewis, author of Gideon's Trumpet)"In this engaging story of the momentous but little-understood summer that gave us the Constitution, David O. Stewart deftly reminds us what a close-run thing America was -- and still is. Stewart's is an important work, written with insight and verve." (Jon Meacham, author of American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation)"At a time that feels to many like the twilight of the Republic, it is heartening to go back to the dawn and watch the authors of the Constitution struggle to create a democracy that would endure. In The Summer of 1787, David O. Stewart re-creates this moment with fidelity, great feeling, and insight. His book renews our appreciation of one of the masterpieces of Western civilization and reminds us, as Benjamin Franklin reminded his colleagues at the Constitutional Convention, that it was one thing to found a republic -- and quite another to keep it." (Patricia O'Toole, author of When Trumpets Call: Theodore Roosevelt After the White House and The Five of Hearts: An Intimate Portrait of Henry Adams and His Friends)"The summer of 1787 may be more than two centuries in our past, but David O. Stewart makes it wonderfully vivid in this fresh and gripping account of America's constitutional birth pangs. Instead of periwigged demigods, Stewart introduces us to fifty-five white males, whose talent for compromise planted the seeds of representative democracy in their garden of privilege. This tale offers the perfect antidote to our own sound-bite and focus-group politics." (Richard Norton Smith, author of Patriarch: George Washington and the New American Nation)