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The Sympathetic State: Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State

Michele Landis Dauber

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#1043471 in Books University Of Chicago Press 2012-11-30 2012-11-30 Original language: English PDF # 1
9.00 x 1.00 x 6.00l, 1.10 #File Name: 0226923495378 pages | File size: 21.Mb

Michele Landis Dauber : The Sympathetic State: Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sympathetic State:
Disaster Relief and the Origins of the American Welfare State:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Origins of the Welfare State By James D. Williams Given the
political debates over the last several years related to taxation, redistribution of wealth, and health care, Dauber's book

is timely. A popular notion is that the origins of the American welfare state lie in FDR's efforts to pull the nation out of the Great Depression. Dauber's carefully researched and clearly written book indicates otherwise. She provides an excellent examination of welfare's history, which dates to the mid-19th century. She explains how from the very beginning of the United States, the General Welfare clause in the Constitution was used to provide relief to disaster-stricken populations. Moreover, she explains how the Supreme Court declined repeatedly to consider the constitutionality of such relief owing to the widely held legal perception that Congress has unlimited and unreviewable taxation power. This discussion helps us understand the Court's recent decision on Obamacare. Then why not 5 stars? Dauber's argument would have been just as effective, in my view, with fewer examples offered in evidence. The text tends to drag in places, although I understand why she may have felt compelled to offer 10 pieces of evidence when 5 would have sufficed. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Book worth reading By convenience shopper This is a wonderful book. Creative, well research, using unusual but illuminating sources. I highly recommend it 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An Important Book By Justin A. Durivage Well written, thoughtfully argued, and drawing on sociology, law, and history, this book will change the way you think about American government and the American welfare state.

Even as unemployment rates soared during the Great Depression, FDR's relief and social security programs faced attacks in Congress and the courts on the legitimacy of federal aid to the growing population of poor. In response, New Dealers pointed to a long tradition dating back to 1790 and now largely forgotten of federal aid to victims of disaster. In *The Sympathetic State*, Michele Landis Dauber recovers this crucial aspect of American history, tracing the roots of the modern American welfare state beyond the New Deal and the Progressive Era back to the earliest days of the republic when relief was forthcoming for the victims of wars, fires, floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes.

A marvelous, deeply researched history of the largely forgotten role of federal disaster relief in the historical development of the American welfare state. Michele Landis Dauber shows very creatively how the Great Depression came to be understood as a single, monolithic event as a disaster that justified new and expansive forms of relief. Political scientists and historians will have to contend with her central argument: that the New Deal was less the product of a constitutional revolution than ordinary lawyering from long-settled precedents.