

## The Signers of the Articles of Confederation

On September 17, 1787, the Constitutional Convention came to a close in the Assembly Room of Independence Hall. All of the states were represented in Congress when the signing of the Articles of Confederation took place, although never present at the same time. Sixteen of the individuals who signed the Articles of Confederation also signed the Declaration of Independence. Congress approved the Articles of Confederation in 1777, and a copy was sent to each of the thirteen states for ratification. The first signing began on July 9, 1778 with delegates from New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and South Carolina involved in the process. The delegates from New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland could not sign because their respective states had not yet ratified the Articles, and the delegates from North Carolina and Georgia were not present on that day. Additional signings occurred when more delegates were in attendance. John Penn was the first of the North Carolina delegation to sign the document on July 10, and the rest of his delegation signed on July 21, 1778. John Wentworth of New Hampshire signed on August 8, 1778. Georgia signed on July 24, New Jersey on November 26, and Delaware on February 12, 1779. It wasn't until Maryland signed that the Articles of Confederation (our first constitution) became the law of the land. Due to a conflict over the control of western lands, Maryland was the last state to ratify on March 1, 1781.

By the time the Articles became official many of the individuals who were involved in its original creation were no longer delegates, and some of the delegates who signed were not involved in the initial debates. The following information includes short biographies of each of the signers of the Articles of Confederation.

### Connecticut

**Samuel Huntington (1731-1796)**—Samuel Huntington was a self-made man who distinguished himself in government on the state and national levels. He served in Congress from 1779-1781 and presided over the adoption of the Articles of Confederation in 1781. He returned to Connecticut and was the Chief Justice of the Superior Court in 1784, Lieutenant Governor in 1785 and Governor from 1786-1796. He was one of the first seven presidential electors from Connecticut.

**Roger Sherman (1723-1793)**—Roger Sherman was a member of the Committee of Five that was chosen to write the Declaration of Independence. He and Robert Morris were the only individuals to sign the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. He was the Judge of the Superior Court of Connecticut from 1766-1789, a member of the Continental Congress from 1774-81; 1783-84 and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Sherman proposed the famed "Connecticut Compromise" at the convention and represented Connecticut in the United States Senate from 1791-93.

**Oliver Wolcott (1726-1797)**—Oliver Wolcott was as much a soldier as he was a politician and served as a Brigadier General in the New York campaigns from 1776-1777. As a Major General, he was involved in defending the Connecticut coast from attacks by the Royal Governor of New York. He was Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1775 and from 1784-89, a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1775-76 and 1778-84, Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut from 1786-96 and Governor from 1796-97.

**Titus Hosmer (1736-1780)**—Titus Hosmer's grandfather, Colonel Thomas Titus, of Hawkhurst, England, was a member of Oliver Cromwell's army and settled in Boston, Massachusetts in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Hosmer graduated from Yale in 1757 and practiced law in Middletown, Connecticut. He was a member of the Connecticut State House of Representatives from 1773-1778 and was elected to Congress in 1778. After leaving Congress, he became a judge of the maritime court of appeals and resumed his law practice.

## The Articles of Confederation: About the Signers *(Continued)*

### Connecticut *(Continued)*

**Andrew Adams (1736-1797)**—Andrew Adams graduated from Yale College and began a law practice in Litchfield, Connecticut. He was elected to Congress in 1776, and was highly respected for being a statesman and a patriot. He was appointed Judge of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts in 1789 and Chief Justice of the State of Connecticut in 1793. He served in that position until his death in 1797.

### Delaware

**Thomas McKean (1734-1817)**—Thomas McKean was the last member of the Second Continental Congress to sign the Declaration of Independence. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1774-81 and served as a delegate to the Congress of the Confederation from 1781-1783. After 1783, McKean became involved in the politics of Pennsylvania and became the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania and the Governor of Pennsylvania from 1799-1812. He retired from politics in 1812 and died at the age of 83 in 1817.

**John Dickinson (1732-1808)**—John Dickinson was born in Maryland in 1732 and was educated in Delaware. He served the colonies of Pennsylvania and Delaware during his distinguished career. Dickinson represented Pennsylvania in Congress from 1774-1776 and began representing Delaware in 1779. He served as a Brigadier General of the Pennsylvania militia and was the President of the State of Delaware in 1781. Upon his return to Philadelphia, Dickinson served as President of Pennsylvania from 1782-1785. He was a member of the delegation to the Constitutional Convention in 1787 that met originally to revise or change the Articles of Confederation.

**Nicholas Van Dyke (1738-1789)**—Nicholas Van Dyke studied law in Philadelphia, was admitted to the bar in 1765 and practiced law in New Castle, Pennsylvania. He was active in both the military and political affairs of the colonies. He reached the rank of Major in the militia and was a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1781. Van Dyke also served as President of Delaware from 1783-1786.

### Georgia

**John Walton (1738-1783)**—John Walton was born in Virginia and became a planter in Augusta, Georgia. He was initially involved in Georgia state politics and was eventually elected to the Continental Congress in 1778. He then became the official surveyor of Richmond County. John Walton was the brother of George Walton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

**Edward Telfair (1735-1807)**—Edward Telfair was born in Scotland and became a successful politician and businessman in Virginia, North Carolina and eventually Georgia. He became one of the earliest supporters of the Revolutionary War, and was a member of the “sons of liberty” in Savannah, Georgia. He was elected to Congress in 1780, 1781 and 1782 and elected Governor of Georgia in 1786 and 1790.

**Edward Langworthy (1738-1802)**—Edward Langworthy was a well-known teacher, politician and writer. Early in his career Langworthy was an instructor at the Bethesda Orphan House and became involved in state politics in 1775. He served as a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1779 and was later involved in the newspaper business. Langworthy moved to Baltimore where he taught the classics at the Baltimore Academy from 1787-1791. He also worked in the customs house until his death in 1802.

## Maryland

**John Hanson (1715-1783)**—John Hanson was a member of the Maryland State House for nine terms and a member of the Continental Congress from 1780-1782. While in Congress he helped to settle the western land issue, which facilitated the ratification of the Articles of Confederation. John Hanson was the first president appointed by Congress under the Articles of Confederation and served from November 5, 1781 to November 4, 1782. During Hanson's one year in office, he approved the Great Seal of the United States that is still used today, gave orders to the military forces toward the end of the American Revolution, officially "received" General George Washington after the American victory at Yorktown, helped establish the first U.S. Treasury Department, the first Secretary of War, and the first Foreign Affairs Department. While in office he also signed all laws, regulations, official papers, and letters associated with his position.

**Daniel Carroll (1730-1796)**—Daniel Carroll was a member of the Continental Congress from 1781-1783 and was appointed as a delegate to represent Maryland at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He was later elected to the state senate of Maryland and served in the first United States Congress from 1789-1791. He was appointed by President George Washington to serve on a council to locate the District of Columbia and the Federal City.

## Massachusetts

**John Hancock (1737-1793)**—John Hancock was the President of the Second Continental Congress when the Declaration of Independence was adopted. He, along with Samuel Adams, was one of the two most wanted men in the colonies by King George III. He served as a major general during the Revolutionary War. Hancock was elected Governor of Massachusetts from 1780-1785 and 1787 until his death in 1793. He was the seventh President of the United States in Congress assembled, from November 23, 1785 to June 6, 1786. John Hancock was one of the original "fathers" of U.S. independence.

**Samuel Adams (1722-1803)**—Samuel Adams was known as the "Firebrand of the Revolution" for his role as an agitator between the colonists and the British prior to the outbreak of hostilities in April 1775. He served in the Continental Congress until 1781, and was a member of the Massachusetts State Senate from 1781-1788. Because he was opposed to a stronger national government, Adams refused to attend the Federal Constitutional Convention in 1787. He served as Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts from 1789-1793 and Governor from 1794-1797.

**Elbridge Gerry (1744-1814)**—Elbridge Gerry served for a time as a member of the state legislature of Massachusetts. Although he attended the meetings in Philadelphia to write a new Constitution, he was opposed to it because it lacked a bill of rights. However, after a "change of heart," he was a member of the House of Representatives for the first two Congresses from 1789-1793. He was Governor of Massachusetts in 1810 and 1811 and died in office as Vice-President under James Madison in 1814.

**Francis Dana (1743-1811)**—Francis Dana graduated from Harvard College in 1762, and upon being admitted to the bar spent a year in England. He was elected to the Continental Congress in 1776 and served until 1779. He was appointed minister to Prussia in 1780 and held that position until 1784. He was then reelected to Congress. Dana was appointed chief justice of Massachusetts in 1791 until he resigned in 1806. He was a founder of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He died in Cambridge, Middlesex County, Massachusetts on April 25, 1811 and is buried in Old Cambridge Cemetery.

The Articles of Confederation: About the Signers *(Continued)***Massachusetts** *(Continued)*

**James Lovell (1737-1814)**—James Lovell was a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1782, receiver of continental taxes 1784-1788, collector of customs in Boston, Massachusetts from 1788-1789 and was appointed naval officer of the port of Boston and Charlestown from 1789 until his death in 1814. During the Revolutionary War, he was a fervent Whig as opposed to his father, John, who was a Loyalist. He was put in prison during the war because of his beliefs but was released via a prisoner exchange.

**Samuel Holten (1738-1816)**—Samuel Holten was born in Danvers, Massachusetts in 1738 and was the town's physician for many years. He was a delegate to Congress in 1777 and served until 1783. He was a delegate to the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention, served in the Congress of the United States from 1793-1796 and was a judge of probate from 1796-1815.

**New Hampshire**

**Josiah Bartlett (1729-1795)**—Josiah Bartlett served in Congress until 1779 and then refused reelection because of fatigue. On the state level he served as the first Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (1779-1782), Associate (1782-1788) and Chief justice of the Superior Court (1788-1790). Bartlett founded the New Hampshire Medical Society in 1791 and was the Governor of New Hampshire (1793-1794).

**John Wentworth, Jr. (1745-1787)**—John Wentworth, Jr. graduated from Harvard College in 1768 and began practicing law in Dover, New Hampshire in 1771. He was a member of the Continental Congress in 1778, a member of the State council from 1780-1784 and served in the State Senate from 1784-1786. He died in Dover, New Hampshire on January 10, 1787 and is buried in Pine Hill Cemetery at Dover.

**New Jersey**

**John Witherspoon (1723-1794)**—John Witherspoon was the only active clergyman among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He served in the Continental Congress from 1776-1782, was elected to the state legislature in New Jersey from 1783-1789 and was the President of the College of New Jersey from 1768-1792. In his later years he spent a great deal of time trying to rebuild the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

**Nathaniel Scudder (1733-1781)**—Nathaniel Scudder was a militia officer and physician who served in the Continental Congress from 1777-1779 and was a trustee of Princeton College from 1778-1779. He was part of the resistance to a British raiding party near Shrewsbury, New Jersey, and was killed in an attack on October 17, 1781. He is buried in the old graveyard at the Tennant Church and was the only congressman to be killed in battle during the Revolutionary War.

**New York**

**James Duane (1733-1797)**—James Duane was heavily involved in New York State politics prior to his election to Congress in 1774. He was a lawyer, Clerk of the Chancery Court, Attorney General of New York, Boundary Commissioner and State Indian Commissioner. Duane served in the state Senate from 1782-1785 and 1788-1790, was Mayor of New York City from 1784-1789, appointed as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention to discuss the ratification of the Federal Constitution and was a United States district judge from 1789-1794.

## The Articles of Confederation: About the Signers *(Continued)*

### New York *(Continued)*

**Francis Lewis (1713-1802)**—Francis Lewis was one who truly felt the tragedy of the Revolutionary War. His wife died as an indirect result of being imprisoned by the British, and he lost all of his property on Long Island, New York during the war. When his wife died, Lewis left Congress and completely abandoned politics.

**William Duer (1747-1799)**—William Duer was born in England, came to America in 1768 and settled in Fort Miller, New York. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1778. Duer moved to New York City in 1783, became a member of the New York Assembly in 1786 and Assistant Secretary of the United States Treasury Department from 1789-1790. In 1792 he was sued by the federal government for financial irregularities while serving in the Treasury Department, and was thrown into debtor's prison.

**Gouverneur Morris (1752-1816)**—Gouverneur Morris was a skilled writer, politician and diplomat. He graduated from King's College (now Columbia University) in 1768 and began practicing law in New York City in 1771. Morris served in the Continental Congress from 1778-1779, moved to Philadelphia and was appointed assistant superintendent from 1781-1785. He was a member of the Pennsylvania delegation at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Morris was appointed by President George Washington as the United States Commissioner to England (1790-1791) and the United States Minister to France (1792-1794). He became a United States Senator (1800-1803), and was the chairman of the Erie Canal Commission (1810-1813). His last elected position was that of president of the New York Historical Society (1816).

### North Carolina

**John Penn (1740-1788)**—John Penn was one of sixteen signers of the Declaration of Independence who also signed the Articles of Confederation. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1775-77; 1779-80 and a member of the Board of War in 1780 which shared responsibility for military affairs with the governor. In 1784 he became a state tax receiver under the Articles of Confederation. After retiring from politics, he practiced law until his death in 1788.

**Cornelius Harnett (1723-1781)**—Cornelius Harnett was a merchant, farmer and politician and served in the Continental Congress from 1777-1779. He was involved in Revolutionary War politics and was a member of the North Carolina "sons of liberty." When the British invaded Wilmington, North Carolina in 1781, Harnett was captured and imprisoned. Although he was paroled shortly thereafter, his health declined, and he died on April 28, 1781.

**John Williams (1731-1799)**—John Williams practiced law in Williamsboro, North Carolina. He was one of the founders of the University of North Carolina and served in the Continental Congress from 1778-1779. He then served as a judge on the North Carolina Supreme Court until his death in 1799.

## Pennsylvania

**Robert Morris (1734-1806)**—Robert Morris has been considered the “Financier of the Revolution,” and contributed his own money to help such causes as the support of troops at Valley Forge and the battles of Trenton and Princeton. In 1781 he suggested a plan that became the Bank of North America and was the Superintendent of Finance under the Articles of Confederation. Morris was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and was later offered the position of Secretary of the Treasury under the administration of George Washington. He declined the position and suggested Alexander Hamilton, who became our first Secretary of the Treasury. He served as a United States Senator from Pennsylvania from 1789-1795.

**Daniel Roberdeau (1727-1795)**—Daniel Roberdeau was a distinguished statesman and soldier who was greatly influenced by the Reverend George Whitefield during the Great Awakening of the 1740s. Before getting involved in politics, Roberdeau was a successful merchant in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. During the Revolutionary War, he was a first Brigadier General of Pennsylvania troops and was a member of Congress from 1777-1779. Fort Roberdeau, named in his honor, was built in 1778 to protect lead mining operations in the Sinking Stream Valley.

**Jonathan Bayard Smith (1742-1812)**—Jonathan Bayard Smith fought in the Battle of Brandywine in 1777 and served in Congress from 1777-1778. He was appointed Justice of the Court of Common Pleas in 1778 and was one of the founders of the University of the State of Pennsylvania. He served as a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania until his death in 1812. Smith was also a trustee of Princeton College from 1779-1808, and was a Vice-President of the Sons of Washington. He was a member of the American Philosophical Society for over forty years.

**William Clingan (1721-1790)**—William Clingan served as a justice of the peace for nearly thirty years from 1757-1786. He served in Congress from 1777-1779 and was the president of the Chester County, Pennsylvania courts from 1780-1786. He was one of the first signers of the Articles of Confederation, and was a Protestant Christian along with 98% of the signers.

**Joseph Reed (1741-1785)**—Joseph Reed was an important military and political figure during the Revolutionary War. He was a graduate of the College of New Jersey (Princeton University) and began practicing law in 1770. Reed served as an aid-de-camp to General George Washington and was an Adjunct General of the Army from 1776-1777. He served in Congress for one term beginning in 1778 and then became the head of the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council from 1779-1781. Reed served as a trustee of the University of Pennsylvania from 1782 until his death in 1785.

## South Carolina

**Henry Laurens (1724-1792)**—Henry Laurens was a wealthy merchant, planter and politician who was opposed to the mercantile policy of the British but was not in support of some of the radical economic actions taken prior to the American Revolution. He served in the Continental Congress from 1777-1780. Laurens was captured by the British in 1780 on his way to Holland and was imprisoned in the Tower of London. He was later set free in 1782 in exchange for British General Cornwallis. Laurens was chosen to help negotiate the Treaty of Paris that officially ended the Revolutionary War (1783).

**William Henry Drayton (1742-1779)**—William Henry Drayton was educated in the field of law in England at Westminster School and Balliol College. Before the American Revolutionary War he was one of King George’s counselors in South Carolina and one of the assistant judges for the province. Because of his revolutionary leanings, he was both dismissed and resigned from those offices. He served in Congress from 1778 until his untimely death in 1779.

The Articles of Confederation: About the Signers *(Continued)***South Carolina** *(Continued)*

**John Mathews (1744-1802)**—John Mathews was born in South Carolina and was educated in the field of law at the Middle Temple. He returned to South Carolina in 1766 to set up a law practice. He was actively involved in state and local politics and served as a Captain in the Colleton County regiment during the Revolutionary War. After serving in the Continental Congress from 1777-1778, Mathews was elected Governor of South Carolina in 1782 and 1783. He was later elected judge of the court of Chancery (1784), the state House of Representatives (1784) and judge of the Court of Equity (1791-1797).

**Richard Hutson (1748-1795)**—Richard Hutson graduated from Princeton College in 1765 and became a well-known judge, lawyer and politician. He was actively involved in state politics and served in the Continental Congress from 1778-1779. During the American Revolutionary War, he was captured by the British during the “fall” of Charleston, and was imprisoned in St. Augustine, Florida from 1780-1782. He served as Lieutenant Governor of South Carolina from 1782-1783. Hutson was a member of the state constitutional convention of 1788, which adopted the Federal Constitution.

**Thomas Heyward, Jr. (1746-1809)**—Thomas Heyward was a planter and lawyer and was one of three signers from South Carolina captured and imprisoned by the British. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1778. After his involvement in national politics, he returned to South Carolina and became a judge and a member of the state legislature. The British destroyed Heyward's home at White Hall during the war, and he was held prisoner until 1781. After the war, he served two terms in the state legislature from 1782-1784. Thomas Heyward became the first President of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina.

**Rhode Island**

**William Ellery (1727-1820)**—William Ellery served with distinction in the Congress of the Confederation until 1786 when he accepted the post of Commissioner of the Continental Loan Office of Rhode Island. He served in that position until 1790 when he was appointed Customs Collector in Newport. Although the British destroyed his home during the American Revolution, Ellery was later able to rebuild his fortune.

**Henry Marchant (1741-1796)**—Henry Marchant was a lawyer who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania. He was the Attorney General of Rhode Island from 1771-1777 and a member of the Assembly before being elected to Congress from 1777-1779. Marchant was also a member of the Constitutional Convention in Rhode Island that ratified the Federal Constitution. He served as United States district judge for Rhode Island from 1790-1796.

**John Collins (1717-1795)**—John Collins was a member of the Continental Congress from 1778-1780 and 1782-1783 and Governor of Rhode Island from 1786-1790. While serving as Governor, Collins cast the deciding vote in the Rhode Island Senate to form a convention to vote upon the adoption or rejection of the Federal Constitution. He was then elected to the first Congress of the United States but refused to take his seat.

## The Articles of Confederation: About the Signers *(Continued)*

### Virginia

**Thomas Adams (1730-1788)**—Richard Henry Lee introduced the resolution for independence to the Second Continental Congress in June 1776. He was a Virginia state legislator from 1780-1784 and served in the national Congress again from 1784-1789. He supported the Constitution after the decision was made to include a bill of rights. He was elected Senator from Virginia from 1789-1792. However, Lee was forced to resign in 1792 due to poor health.

**Thomas Adams (1730-1788)**—John Banister was born in Virginia, educated in England and began a law practice in Petersburg, Virginia. He was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses and was elected to the Continental Congress in 1778. Banister was a Major and Lieutenant Colonel in the Virginia militia during the Revolutionary War and fought during the British invasion of Virginia in 1781.

**Thomas Adams (1730-1788)**—Thomas Adams was a legislator and businessman from Kent County, Virginia. He was a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses and a member of Congress from 1778-1779. After his term was completed in the Congress, Adams served in the Virginia State Senate from 1783-1786. Adams died on his estate, “Cowpasture”, in August of 1788.

**John Harvie (1742-1807)**—John Harvie was a boyhood friend of Thomas Jefferson and his father (also named John Harvie) became Jefferson’s legal guardian after the death of Peter Jefferson (Jefferson’s father) in 1757. Harvie was an American lawyer, builder and politician who served in the Continental Congress from 1777-1778. After 1778, Harvie worked as a purchasing agent and helped supply the Virginia militia and Continental Army. He died in 1807 after falling off a ladder while inspecting one of his building projects.

**Francis Lightfoot Lee (1734-1797)**—Francis Lightfoot Lee was the younger brother of Richard Henry Lee. He signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation as well as serving on both the military and marine committees during his time in Congress. He left Congress in 1779 and served a few years in the Virginia state legislature.



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