MEN OF THE DECLARATION III

INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL

JULY 1, 2018

This Fourth of July is the 242nd birthday of when our Founders' issued a declaration of independence to King George III and the Parliament of Great Britain. Fifty-six men from the thirteen colonies signed the document and its distribution signaled the beginning of the War for Independence.

There are but a few men who are presently well known among the signers such as John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lightfoot Lee, and Thomas Jefferson. The names of this year's thirteen are relatively unknown, yet to a man, these individuals brought sterling credentials to the debate in Philadelphia. Lawyers, educators, planters, businessmen, and military officers made up this distinguished gathering of highly educated and accomplished leaders of the fledgling commonwealth.

I have selected one man from each of the thirteen colonies for our study. Each was chosen to demonstrate the high degree of honor, integrity, patriotism, courage, intelligence, ingenuity, and accomplishments they possessed. They exemplify the types of men who gathered as one to participate in the founding of our Republic

It is my intent that the synopses of these individuals' biographies will adequately illustrate and amplify the magnanimity of the men who stepped forward, debated, concluded, and went public by signing their names to a document that fomented revolution against the Mother Country. And they did so with clear vision of the magnitude of their decision as they mutually pledged to each other "our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor."

The text cited is transcribed from the original text written in 1848 by Benson J. Lossing and sentence structure, and in some cases spelling and punctuation, are typical of the writing style of the nineteenth century.

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1. From the Colony of New Hampshire:

William Whipple. WILLIAM WHIPPLE was born at Kittery in New Hampshire (that portion which is now the State of Maine) in the year 1730. His early education was received at a common school in his native town. When quite a lad, he went to sea, in which occupation he was engaged for several years. At the age of twenty nine he quitted the seafaring life, and, with his brother, Joseph Whipple, entered into mercantile pursuits in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

He early espoused the cause of the colonies and soon became a leader among the opposition to British authority. In 1775 he was elected a member of the Provincial Congress of New Hampshire, and was chosen by that body, one of the Committee of Safety.[1] When in 1775, the people of that State organized a temporary government, Mr. Whipple was chosen a member of the Council.

[1] These committees were organized in several of the States. Their business was to act as an executive body to regulate the general concerns of the government during the continuance of the war.

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In January, 1776, he was chosen a delegate to the Continental Congress, and was among those who, on the fourth of July of that year, voted for the Declaration of Independence. He remained in Congress until 1777, when he retired from that body, having been appointed a Brigadier General of the New Hampshire Militia. He was very active in calling out and equipping troops for the campaign against [John] Burgoyne.[2] He was under [Horatio] Gates[3] at the capture of Burgoyne, and was one of the commissioners to arrange the terms of capitulation.

In 1782, he was appointed by Robert Morris, financial agent in New Hampshire. He was also appointed, during that same year, as side judge of the Superior Court of New Hampshire.

Soon after this appointment, in attempting to sum up the arguments of counsel, and submit the case to the jury, he was attacked with a violent palpitation of the heart, which ever after troubled him.

In 1785 he was seriously affected while holding court; and, retiring to his chamber, he never left it again while living. He expired on the twenty-eighth day of November 1985 in the fifty-fifth year of his age.

Thus terminated the valuable life of one who rose from the post of a cabin boy, to a rank among the first men of his country. His life and character present one of those bright examples of self-reliance which cannot be too often pressed upon the attention of the young; and, although surrounding circumstances had much to so in the development of his talents, yet, after all, the great secret of his success was doubtless a hopeful reliance upon a conscious ability to perform any duty required of him.

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[2] "British army officer, as major general commanded expedition from Canada against American colonies; captured Ticonderoga but forced to surrender to Gen. Horatio Gates at Saratoga (1777)" (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary* [Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Inc., Publishers, 1995], s.v. Burgoyne, John."

[3] Ibid. "American Revolutionary officer [major general], born Maldon, England. Took colonial side at outbreak of Revolutionary War; forced Burgoyne to surrender at Saratoga," s.v. Gates, Horatio.

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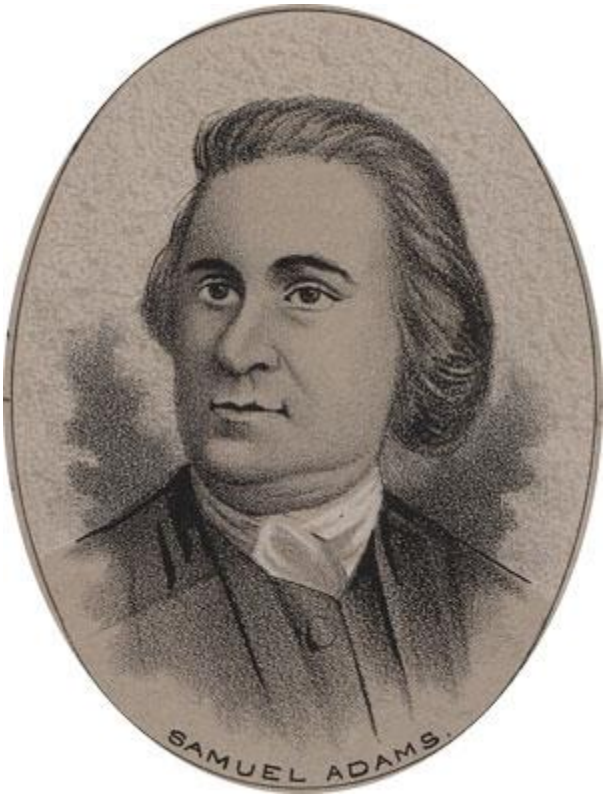
2. From the Colony of Massachusetts:



Samuel Adams. SAMUEL ADAMS. This distinguished patriot of the Revolution, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on the twenty-second of September, 1722. He was of pilgrim ancestors, and had been taught the principles of Freedom, from his infancy. His father was a man of considerable wealth, and was for a long series of years a member of the Massachusetts Assembly, under the Colonial Government. He resolved to give Samuel a liberal education.[4] After a preparatory course of study, he entered him at Harvard College, Cambridge, where, in 1740, at the age of eighteen years, he took his degree of A.B.

[4] "Liberal arts [L. *artes liberals* the higher arts, which, among the Romans only freemen (*liberi*) were permitted to pursue.] The languages, sciences, philosophy, history, etc., which compose the curriculum of academic or collegiate education, as distinguished from technical or professional education" (*Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* [1953], s.v. "liberal arts").

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When Samuel was twenty-five years old, his father died, and the cares of the family and estate developed on him, as the oldest son. Yet his mind was constantly active in watching the movements of the British government, and he spent a great deal of his time in talking and writing in favor of the resistance of the Colonies to the oppressions of the crown and its ministers. He took a firm and decided stand against the Stamp Act and its antecedent kindred schemes to tax the Colonies. As early as 1763, he boldly expressed his sentiments relative to the rights and privileges of the Colonists. (I)n that year, he denied the right of Parliament to tax the Colonies without their consent—denied the supremacy of Parliament, and suggested a union of all the Colonies, as necessary for their protection against British aggressions. It is that this was the first public expression of such sentiments in America, and that they were the spark that kindled the flame upon the altar of Freedom here.

In 1765, Mr. Adams was chosen a representative for Boston, in the General Assembly, and became early distinguished in that body, for his intelligence and activity. He became a leader of the opposition to the royal governor,[5] and treated with disdain the efforts made to silence him, although the offers proffered would have placed him in affluent circumstances.

During the excitement of the *Boston Massacre*, he was among the most active; and chiefly through his influence, and the boldness with which he demanded the removal of troops from Boston, was that object effected.

Other bold movements on his part, caused him to be selected as an object of ministerial vengeance, and when Governor Gage issued his proclamation, offering pardon to all who would return to their allegiance, Samuel Adams and John Hancock were alone excepted. This greatly increased their popularity, and fired the people with indignation. Adams was among those who secretly matured the plan of proposing a general Congress, and appointing delegates thereto, in spite of the opposition of Governor Gage. Mr. Adams was one of the five delegates appointed, and he took his seat in that body on the fifth of September 1774.

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[5] "Thomas Gage. 1721–1787. English general and colonial governor. Commander in chief in North America, headquarters at New York (1763–73)" (*Merriam-Webster's Biographical Dictionary*, s.v. "Gage, Thomas").

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He continued an active member of Congress until 1781, and was among those who joyfully affixed their signatures to the Declaration of Independence.

The journals of Congress during that time show his name upon almost every important committee of that body. When, in the General Council of the States, independence was proposed, and the timid faltered, and the over-prudent hesitated, the voice of Samuel Adams was ever loudest in denunciations of a temporizing policy, and also in the utterance of strong encouragement to the fainthearted. "I should advise persisting in our struggle for liberty. Though it were revealed from Heaven that nine hundred and ninety-nine were to perish, and only one of a thousand were to survive and retain his liberty! One such freeman must possess more virtue, and enjoy more happiness, than a thousand slaves; and let him propagate his like, and transmit to them what he hath so nobly preserved."

He expired on the third day of October 1803 in the eighty-second year of his age.

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3. From the Colony of Rhode Island:

William Ellery. WILLIAM ELLERY, of Rhode Island, in the Continental Congress of 1776, was born at Newport, on the twenty-second of December 1727. His father paid particular attention to his early education, and when qualified, he placed him in Harvard College, where he was distinguished as a close student, particularly of the Greek and Latin languages. He graduated in 1747, at the age of twenty years, with the most honorable commendations of the faculty. He chose the profession of the law as a business, and when he had completed his studies, he commenced practice in Newport, then one of the most flourishing places in the British American Colonies.

For twenty years, Mr. Ellery practiced law successfully, and acquired a fortune. When the troubles of the Revolution began, and, as an active patriot, he enjoyed the entire confidence of his fellow-citizens—he was called into public service.

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NOTE: The active patriotism of Mr. Ellery excited the ire of the British, and when Newport was taken possession of by the enemy they burnt Mr. Ellery's house, and nearly all of his property was destroyed.

Rhode Island was all alive with sympathy; and the burning of the *Gaspee*,[6] in Providence Bay, in 1772, and the formal withdrawal of the allegiance of the Province from the British crown, by an act of her legislature, as early as May 1776, are an evidence of the deep, patriotic feeling with which her people were imbued. She promptly responded to the call for a general Congress, and Stephen Hopkins[7] and William Ellery were sent as delegates.

Mr. Ellery was a very active member of Congress, and on the second day of August 1771 he signed the Declaration of Independence.

In 1778, Mr. Ellery left Congress for a few weeks, and repaired to Rhode Island, to assist in a plan to drive the British from the island.[8] It proved abortive, and many of the inhabitants were reduced to great distress. Mr. Ellery exerted his influence in Congress, successfully, for their relief.

In 1784, he was one of a committee to whom the definitive Treaty of Peace with Great Britain was referred. At this time, he was judge for the Supreme Court of Rhode Island.

His death occurred on the fifteenth of February 1820 in the seventy-third year of his age. As a patriot and a Christian, his name will ever be revered.

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[6] A British armed vessel was, in 1772, placed in Providence harbor for the purpose of enforcing the revenue laws. The commander demanded the obeisance of every merchant vessel that entered, by lowering their flags. One vessel refused, and the *Gaspee* gave chase. The merchantman so maneuvered as to cause the *Gaspee* to run aground, and before she could be got off, she was boarded at night by the crews of several boats from Providence, and all on board were made prisoners and sent ashore; after which the vessel was set on fire, and burned to the water's edge.

[7] Stephen Hopkins was included among the Declaration's signatories in our second presentation of, "Men of the Declaration" in July 2017.

[8] Rhode Island was taken possession of by the British in 1776, on the very day that Washington crossed the Delaware. The British troops were commanded by Sir Henry Clinton, and the squadron by Sir Peter Parker. Rhode Island remained in possession of the enemy three years.

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NOTE: He was always fond of reading the classics in the Latin and Greek languages. He perused *Tully's Offices*[9] on the morning of his death, while sitting in a chair. He soon afterward commenced reading *Cicero*, when his attendants discovered that he was dead, but still holding the book in his hand.

[9] "Tully" is the eighteenth-century name used for Marcus Tullius Cicero, 106–43 B.C., Roman orator and statesman. "Offices" refers to Cicero's *De Officiis*, an essay on duty.

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4. From the Colony of Connecticut:

Roger Sherman. ROGER SHERMAN, of Connecticut, one of the most remarkable men of the Revolution, was born in Newton, Massachusetts, on the nineteenth of April 1721. In 1723, the family moved to Stonington, in that State, where they lived until the death of Roger's father, in 1741. Roger was then only nineteen years of age, and the whole care and support of a large family devolved on him. He had been apprenticed to a shoemaker, but he now took charge of the small farm his father left. In 1744, they sold the farm, and moved to New Milford, in Connecticut, Where an elder brother, who was married, resided. Roger performed the journey on foot, carrying his shoemaker's tools with him, and for some time he worked industriously at his trade there.

Mr. Sherman's early education was exceedingly limited, but with a naturally strong and active mind, he acquired a large stock of knowledge from books, during his apprenticeship.

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Not long after he settled in New Milford, he formed a partnership with his brother in a mercantile business, but all the while was very studious. He turned his attention to the study of law, during his leisure hours; and so proficient did he become in legal knowledge, that he was admitted to the bar in December 1754.[10]

In 1766, he was elected to the senate, or upper house of the legislature of Connecticut; and it was at this time that the passage of the Stamp Act was bringing the politicians of America to a decided stand in relation to the repeated aggressions of Great Britain. Roger Sherman fearlessly took part with the patriots, and was a leader among them in Connecticut, until the war broke out. He was elected a delegate from Connecticut to the Continental Congress in 1774.

He was one of the most active members of that body, and was appointed one of the Committee to prepare a draft of a Declaration of Independence; a document to which he affixed his signature with hearty good will, after it was adopted by Congress.

He was a delegate from Connecticut in the Convention in 1787 that framed the present Constitution of the United States; and he was a member of the State Convention of Connecticut which assembled to act upon the ratification of that instrument. For two years after the organization of the government under the Constitution, he was a member of the United States House of Representatives. He was then promoted to the Senate, which office he filled at the time of his death, which took place on the twenty-third day of July 1793 in the seventy-third year of his age.

He was twice married, the first time to Elizabeth Hartwell, of Stoughton, and the second time to Rebecca Prescott, of Danvers. By his first wife he had seven children, and eight by his last.

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[10] Mr. Sherman had no instructor or guide in the study of law, neither had he any books but such as he borrowed, yet he became one of the most profound jurists of his day.

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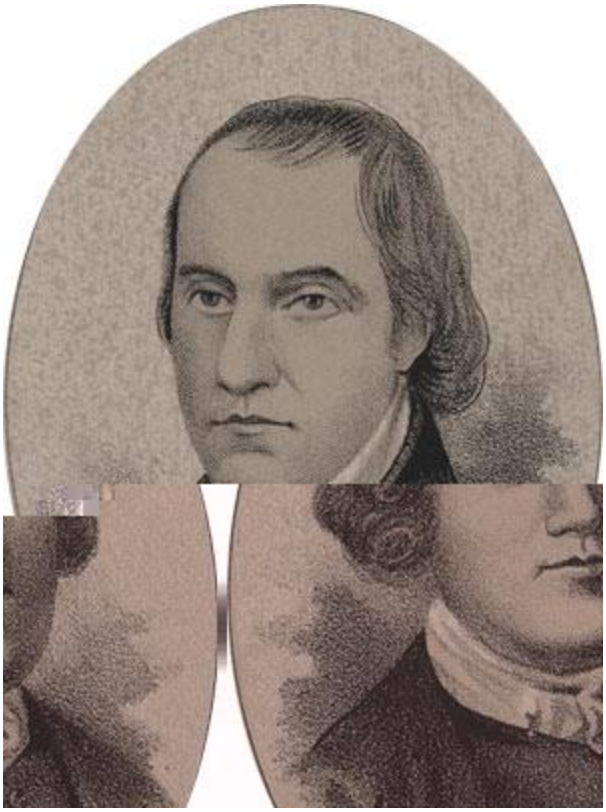
5. From the Colony of New York:



William Floyd. WILLIAM FLOYD, of New York. Wales, in Great Britain, was the fatherland of William Floyd. His grandfather came hither from that country in the year 1680, and settled at Setauket, on Long Island. He was distinguished for his wealth, and possessed great influence among his brother agriculturists.

The subject of his memoir was born on the seventeenth day of December 1734. His wealthy father gave him every opportunity for acquiring useful knowledge. He had scarcely closed his studies, before the death of his father called him to the supervision of the estate, and he performed his duties with admirable skill and fidelity. His various excellences of character, united with a pleasing address, made him very popular; and having espoused the republican cause in opposition to the oppressions of the mother country, he was soon called into active public life.

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At the age of twenty-seven years he married a Miss Meredith, and entered into mercantile business with his father-in-law, and his son, under the firm of Meredith and Sons. His uncle died about the same time, and left the principal part of his large fortune to Mr. Clymer. Still he continued in business with his father-in-law, until his death; and with his brother-in-law afterward, until 1782.

Mr. Clymer expressed decided republican principles; and when the Stamp Act aroused the resistance of the American people, he was among the most ardent defenders of the republican cause.

In 1776, after two of the Pennsylvania delegates in the General Congress declined voting for the Declaration of Independence, and withdrew from their seats, Mr. Clymer and Dr. [Benjamin] Rush[16] were appointed to succeed them, and they both joyfully affixed their signatures to that instrument. Mr. Clymer was soon afterward appointed one of a committee to visit the northern army at Ticonderoga; and when the British approached Philadelphia at the close of 1776, and Congress retired to Baltimore, he was put upon a committee with Robert Morris[17] and others, to remain as a Committee of Vigilance in that city.

Mr. Clymer was peculiarly obnoxious to the British, an evidence of his patriotic zeal and unwavering attachment to the republican cause.[18]

While the enemy were in possession of Philadelphia in the winter of 1788, they surrounded a house which they thought was Mr. Clymer's, with the intention of demolishing it, but they discovered it to belong to a relative of his of the same name, and they spared the edifice.

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[16] Dr. Benjamin Rush was included among the Declaration's signatories in our initial presentation, "Men of the Declaration," in July 2016.

[17] Robert Morris was included among the Declaration's signatories in our second presentation, "Men of the Declaration II," in July 2017.

[18] After the defeat of the Americans at Brandywine, and the British were marching triumphantly toward Philadelphia, Mr. Clymer moved his family into the country for safety. But their retreat was discovered, and the British soldiers sacked the house, destroyed the furniture, and wasted every sort of property which they could find.

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Mr. Clymer was a member of the Convention that framed the Federal Constitution, and was elected one of the first members of Congress, convened under that instrument. He declined re-election, and appointed, by President Washington, supervisor of the revenue for the State of Pennsylvania. This was an office in which great firmness and decision of character were requisite, in consequence of the spirit of resistance to the collection of revenue which was then abroad.

In 1796, he was appointed, with Colonels Hawkins and Pickens, to negotiate a treaty with the Cherokee and Creek tribes of Indians in Georgia. This they effected to the mutual satisfaction of the contending parties. This mission closed the public life of Mr. Clymer, and the remainder of his days was spent in acts of private usefulness, and personal preparation for another world. He died on the twenty-fourth day of January 1813 in the seventy-fourth year of his age. His long life was an active and useful one and not a single moral stain marked its manifested purity.

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8. From the Colony of Delaware:

Caesar Rodney. CAESAR RODNEY was born at Dover, in the Province of Delaware, in the year 1730. He was descended from English ancestry. His grandfather came from England soon after William Penn commenced the settlement of Philadelphia. After remaining a short time in Philadelphia, and forming acquaintances with some of its most esteemed citizens, he went into the county of Kent, on the Delaware, and settled down upon a plantation. He was an active man, and becoming very popular, he held many posts of honor and distinction in that Province. He had several sons, but lost them all except his youngest, Caesar, the father of the subject of this memoir. Unambitious of public honors, and preferring the quiet of domestic life to the bustle and turmoil of the political field, he declined all offices that were tendered to him; and in the midst of agricultural pursuits he enriched his mind by study, and prepared his children for the duties of life.

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He married the daughter of an esteemed clergyman, and, Caesar being the first born, received their special attention in the matter of education of mind and heart.

On the death of his father, Mr. Rodney as the eldest male heir inherited the paternal estate, and with it, the distinguished consideration with which the family had ever been regarded.

When the Stamp Act excited the jealousy and alarm of the colonies, Mr. Rodney boldly proclaimed his sentiments in opposition to it and several antecedent acts of injustice which the British government had inflicted upon her colonies in America. He acted as well as thought and spoke, and when the "Stamp Act Congress" met in New York, in 1765, Mr. Rodney, together with Mr. [Thomas] McKean[19] and Mr. Rollock, was chosen delegates thereto by unanimous vote.

Mr. Rodney was a member of the Provincial Assembly in 1769, and was chosen its Speaker. He continued a member, and the Speaker of that body until 1774, and as chairman of the corresponding committee, he was arduous in plying his pen in the interchange of political sentiments with his compatriots in other colonies. He was elected a delegate to the General Congress, by a convention of the people of the three counties of Delaware, in August 1774 and took his seat at the opening of Congress, on the fifth of September following. His colleagues were Thomas McKean and George Reed,[20] and three more devoted and active men than these could hardly be found. He was one of a committee who drew up a Declaration of Rights and set forth, in an address, the causes for complaint, under which the colonists groaned.

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[19] Thomas McKean was included among the Declaration's signatories in our first presentation, "Men of the Declaration," in July 2016.

[20] George Read was included among the Declaration's signatories in our second presentation, "Men of the Declaration II," in July 2017.

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Mr. Rodney was elected a delegate for 1775, and while attending to his duties in Congress, he was appointed Brigadier General of his province. He was alternately in Congress and at home, attending at the latter place to the duties of his military station. He was there during the closing debates upon the proposition for a Declaration of Independence in 1776, but was sent for by his colleague, Mr. McKean, so as to secure the vote of Delaware for that important measure. He arrived in time to give his voice for independence, and enjoyed the high privilege of signing the revered parchment.

In the autumn of 1776, the people of Delaware called a convention to frame a State Constitution, and to elect delegates to the next Congress. Through the machinations of tory members of that convention, whose principles to a great extent leavened it, Mr. Rodney and Mr. McKean were not re-elected.

He joined the main army of Washington when the British under Lord Howe landed at the mouth of the Elk River, and directed their march toward Philadelphia.

General Howe, finding it impracticable to reach Philadelphia by land, embarked his troops on board the British fleet, then lying off Sandy Hook, and proceeded to the Chesapeake Bay. His troops were landed at the mouth of Elk River, on the twenty-fifth of August 1777, and that was the first intimation Washington had of his real destination. The British immediately commenced their march toward Philadelphia, and the Americans at the same time marched from that city to meet them. They met upon the river Brandywine, where the battel of that name, so disastrous to the Americans, occurred. It was there that La Fayette[21] greatly distinguished himself, and was severely wounded.

[21] "Lafayette, French aristocrat who fought with the American colonists against the British in the American Revolution. In July 1777, he arrived in Philadelphia. Appointed a major general by the colonists, he quickly struck up a lasting friendship with the American commander in chief, George Washington. Lafayette fought with

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Not long after this event, toryism became so much in the minority, that it had but little power to oppose the patriots and General Rodney was again elected to Congress.

While thus laboring for his country's good, Mr. Rodney suffered greatly from the effect of a disease that had been upon him from his youth. Feeling conscious that he was wasting away, he retired from public life and calmly awaited the summons for departure to the spirit-land. He died early in the year 1783, when in the fifty-third year of his age.

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distinction at the Battle of Brandywine, Pennsylvania, on Sept. 11, 1777" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* [2010], 7:96–97).

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9. From the Colony of Maryland:

William Paca. WILLIAM PACA was the descendant of a wealthy planter on the east shore of Maryland. He was born at Wye Hall, his paternal residence, in the year 1740. His early moral and intellectual training was carefully attended to, and at a proper age he was placed in the Philadelphia College, whence he graduated, after a course of arduous and profitable study, with great credit to himself. He then commenced the study of the law with Mr. Hammond and Mr. Hall, of Annapolis, and Samuel Chase,[22] his subsequent Congressional colleague, was a fellow student.

[22] Samuel Chase was included among the Declaration's signatories in our second presentation, "Men of the Declaration II," in July 2017.

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Mr. Paca was admitted to the bar at the age of twenty, and the next year (1761), he was chosen a member of the Provincial Assembly. When the Stamp Act, in 1765), aroused the people of the colonies to their common danger, Mr. Paca, with Mr. Chase and Mr. [Charles] Carroll,[23] warmly opposed its operation.

Every succeeding measure of the British government, asserting its right to tax the Americans without their consent, was fearlessly condemned by him, and thus he soon obtained the disapprobation of the royal governor of the Province, and of those who adhered to the king and Parliament. Like Mr. Chase, he became very popular with the people by his patriotic conduct.

He was appointed by a State Convention of Maryland, one of its five representatives in the Continental Congress, who were instructed to "agree to all measures which might be deemed necessary to obtain a redress of American grievances." Mr. Paca was re-elected in 1775 and continued a member of Congress until 1778, when he was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of his state.

Like Mr. Chase, Mr. Paca was much embarrassed in Congress by the opposition of his constituents to independence, and their loyal adherence to the British Crown, as manifested in their instructions, frequently repeated in the early part of 1776.

The people of Maryland, as represented in its State Convention, were alarmed lest their enthusiastic delegates should favor independence, and early in 1776, they sent them instructions, in which they forbade their voting for such a measure. They also passed a resolution "that Maryland would not be bound by a vote of a majority of Congress to declare for independence."

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[23] Charles Carroll, of Carrollton, was included among the Declaration's signatories in our first presentation, "Men of the Declaration," in July 2016.

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But on the twenty-eighth of [May] a remarkable change in their opinions took place, and they *ceased praying for the king and royal family!* Toward the latter part of June the convention finished its evolutions by a "right about face" and withdrew their restrictions upon the votes of their delegates. Thus relieved, Mr. Paca and his associates continued their efforts to effect a declaration of independence with more zeal than ever, and recorded their votes for the severance of the political bond of union with Britain, on the fourth of July following. On the second of August, they fearlessly affixed their signatures to the parchment.

In 1788, he was a member of the convention of Maryland, called to act upon the ratification of the Federal Constitution. He was a firm advocate there for its ratification, which event took place in November. After the new Constitution had gone into effect, and offices under it were to be filled, President Washington nominated him Judge for the district of Maryland. This office he held until the period of his death, which was in the year 1799, when he was in the sixtieth year of his age. He was a pure and active patriot, a consistent Christian, and a valuable citizen, in every sense of the word.

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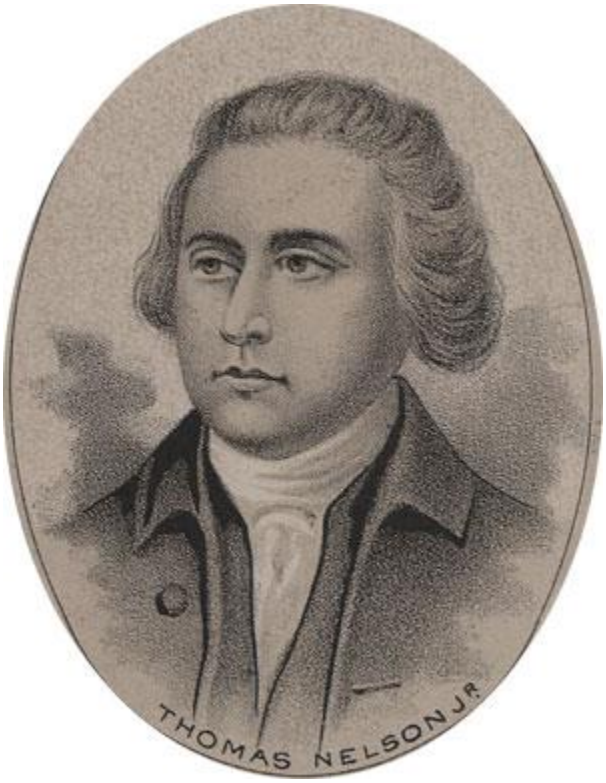
10. From the Colony of Virginia:



Thomas Nelson Jr. THOMAS NELSON JR. was born in Yorktown, in Virginia, on the twenty-sixth of December 1738. His father, William Nelson was a native of England, and emigrated to America about the beginning of the last century. By prudence and industry he accumulated a large fortune, and held rank among the first families of Virginia.

Thomas was the oldest son of his parents, and his father sent him to England at the age of fourteen years to be educated. He was placed in a distinguished private school not far from London, and after completing a preparatory course in studies there, he went to Cambridge and was entered a member of Trinity College. He remained there, a close and diligent student until 1761, when he returned to America.

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Mr. Nelson watched with much interest the movements of the British Parliament, during and after the time of the administration of Mr. [George] Grenville, and his sympathies were keenly alive in favor of the Americans and their cause. His first appearance in public life was in 1774 when he was elected a member of the House of Burgesses of Virginia, and there he took sides with the patriots. It was during that session that the resolutions reprobating the "Boston Port Bill" caused Lord [John Murray] Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, to dissolve the Assembly. Eighty-nine of the members, among whom was Mr. Nelson, met the next day at a neighboring tavern, and formed an association far more efficient in throwing up the strong bulwarks of freedom, than was the regular Assembly.

In the spring of 1775, he was elected a member of a general convention, and there he displayed such boldness of spirit, that he was looked upon as an efficient leader in the patriotic movements of the day. Much to the alarm of his friends, he proposed in that convention, the bold and almost treasonable measure of organizing the militia of the State in defense of the chartered rights of the people. Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee,[24] and others, warmly seconded the proposition, and it was adopted by the convention.[25] This act told Governor Dunmore and his royal master, in language that could not be mistaken, that Virginia was determined to exercise with freedom all the privileges guaranteed to her by the British Constitution.[26]

In the spring of 1777, Mr. Nelson was seized with an alarming illness, which confined its attack chiefly to his head, and nearly deprived him, for a time, to his powers of memory.

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[24] Richard Henry Lee was included among the Declaration's signatories in our first presentation, "Men of the Declaration," in July 2016.

[25] Mr. Nelson was appointed to the command of one regiment, Patrick henry of another, and Richard Henry Lee of another, each holding the rank of colonel.

[26] It was not long before the wisdom of those military movements became apparent, for the royal governor of Virginia [Dunmore], as well as those of some of the other colonies, attempted to secure the powder and other munitions of war in the public magazines, under a secret order from the British ministry. This movement clearly divulged the premeditated design of disarming the people, and reducing them to slavery.

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His convalescence was slow, and he resigned his seat [in Congress] and retired to private life. But he was not suffered long to remain thee, for the appearance of a British fleet off the coast of Virginia, and the contemplated attack of the enemy upon the almost defenseless seaboard, called him into the field at the head of the militia of the State.[27]

About that time, the financial embarrassments of Congress caused that body to make an appeal to the young men of the Union, of wealth and character, to aid in recruiting the army, and otherwise assisting their country. Mr. Nelson entered heartily into the measure, and by the free use of his influence and purse, he raised a volunteer corps, who placed him at their head, and proceeded to join Washington at Philadelphia.

The sudden call of the militia from their homes left many families in embarrassed circumstances for a great part of the agricultural operations were suspended. General Nelson also distributed his money liberally among them, and thus more than a hundred families were kept from absolute want.

In 1781, Virginia became the chief theatre of warlike operations. The term of Mr. [Thomas] Jefferson's official duties as Governor of the State, expired, and General Nelson was elected his successor. This, however, did not drive him from the field, but as both governor and commander-in-chief of the militia of the State, he placed himself at the head of a considerable force, and formed a junction with La Fayette, who had been sent there to check the northward progress of [Maj. Gen. Charles] Cornwallis. By great personal exertions and a liberal use of his own funds, he succeeded in keeping his force together until the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown. He headed a body of militia in the siege of that place, and although he owned a fine mansion in the town, he did not hesitate to bombard it.

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[27] Mr. Nelson's popularity at that time in Virginia was almost unbounded. The governor and council appointed him Brigadier General and Commander-in-Chief of the military forces of the State.

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During the siege he observed that while the Americans poured their shot and shells thick and fast into every part of the town, they seemed carefully to avoid firing in the direction of his house. Governor Nelson inquired why his house was spared, and was informed that it was out of personal regard for him. He at once begged them not to make any difference on that account, and at once a well-directed fire was opened upon it. At that moment a number of British officers occupied it, and were at dinner enjoying a feast, and making merry with wine. The shots of the Americans entered the house, and killing two of the officers, effectually ended the conviviality of the party.

In this as in everything else, Nelson's patriotism was conspicuous and General Washington in his official account of the siege, made honorable mention of the great services of Governor Nelson and his militia.

Within a month after the battle of Yorktown, Governor Nelson, finding his health declining, resigned his office and returned to private life. His health gradually declined until 1789, when, on the fourth day of January, his useful life closed. He was in the fifty-third year of his age.

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11. From the Colony of North Carolina:

Joseph Hewes. JOSEPH HEWES. The parents of Joseph Hewes were natives of Connecticut, and belonged to the Society of Friends, or Quakers. Immediately after their marriage they moved to New Jersey, and purchased a small farm in Kingston, within a short distance of Princeton. It was there that Joseph was born in the year 1730. He was educated at the college in Princeton, and at the close of his studies he was apprenticed to a merchant in Philadelphia, to qualify him for a commercial life. On the termination of his apprenticeship, his father furnished him with a little money capital, to which he added the less fleeting capital of a good reputation, and he commenced mercantile business on his own account. His business education had be thorough and he pursued the labors of commerce with such skill and success, that in a few years he amassed an ample fortune.

At the age of thirty years, Mr. Hewes moved to North Carolina, and settled in Edenton, which became his home for life.

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He entered into business there, and his uprightness and honorable dealings soon won for him the profound esteem of the people. While yet a comparative stranger among them, they evinced their appreciation of his character, by electing him a member of the legislature of North Carolina in 1763 and so faithfully did he discharge his duties that they re-elected him several consecutive years.

Mr. Hewes was among the earliest of the decided patriots of North Carolina, and used his influence in bringing about a Convention of the people of the State, to second the call of Massachusetts for a General Congress. The convention that met in the summer of 1774, elected him one of the delegates for that State, in the Continental Congress that met at Philadelphia in September following. He took his seat on the fourteenth of the month and was immediately placed upon the committee appointed to draw up a Declaration of Rights. During that session he was actively engaged in maturing a plan for a general non-importation agreement throughout the Colonies, and he voted for and signed it. In this act his devoted patriotism was manifest, for it struck a deadly blow at the business in which he was engaged. It was a great sacrifice for him to make, yet he cheerfully laid it upon the altar of Freedom.

Mr. Hewes was again elected a delegate to Congress in 1775 and took his seat at the opening on the tenth of May. He seldom engaged in debate, but as an unwearied committeeman, he performed signal service there. He was head of the naval committee, and was in effect the first Secretary of the Navy of the United States.

Mr. Hewes was a member of Congress for 1776, and North Carolina having early taken a decided stand in favor of independence, his own views upon this question were fully sustained by his instructions, and he voted for and signed the Declaration thereof.

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Soon, thereafter, he returned home, for the troubles there demanded his presence, and his private affairs needed his attention to save his fortune from being scattered to the winds. He remained at home until July 1779 when he resumed his seat in Congress. But his constitution, naturally weak, could not support the arduous labors of his station, and his health failed so rapidly that he was obliged to resign his seat. He left it on the twenty-ninth of October 1779 and being too unwell to travel, he remained in Philadelphia. But he only lived eleven days after he left his seat in Congress. He died on the tenth of November following, in the fiftieth year of his age.

He was the first and only one of the signers of the Declaration, who died at the seat of Government. His remains were followed to the grave by Congress in a body, and a large concourse of citizens of Philadelphia.

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12. From the Colony of South Carolina:

Thomas Lynch Jr. THOMAS LYNCH JUNIOR was born in Prince George's parish, upon the North Santee river, South Carolina, on the fifth day of August 1749. He was a descendant of an ancient Austrian family, natives of the town of Lintz. A branch of the family moved to England, and settled in the county of Kent. Thence they went to Connaught \'kä-not\ in Ireland, and it was from that place that the great-grandfather of our subject emigrated to America and settled in South Carolina, a short time after its first settlement. He purchased large tracts of land, and when they fell into the possession of the father of Thomas Lynch, junior, they possessed a great value, and gave him a splendid fortune. He was a man of great influence, and having early espoused the cause of the colonists, he was elected a delegate to the first Continental Congress which met in Philadelphia in 1774. He continued a member of that body until his death.

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Thomas Lynch, Junior, was sent to England, to be educated, at the age of thirteen years. He had previously received a good academical (*sic*) education at Georgetown in South Carolina. In England he was placed in Eton School, that seminary of preparation for higher instruction, in which for a long period, many eminent men were educated. After completing his preparatory studies there, he entered the University of Cambridge, where he took his degree, and he left the institution bearing the highest respect of the tutors, because of his studious and virtuous career while there.

On leaving Cambridge, young Lynch entered upon the study of the law. He became acquainted with some of the leading politicians of the day and acquired a pretty thorough knowledge of the movements of the government. When he heard the murmur of discontent come from his native land, and listened to the haughty tone of British statesmen, when speaking of the colonies, he felt an irrepressible desire to return home. He obtained permission of his father, and reached South Carolina in 1772. He soon afterward married a beautiful young lady, named Shebrick, between whom and himself, a mutual attachment had existed from childhood. This tender relation and the possession of an ample fortune were calculated to wed him to the ease and enjoyment of domestic life, but young Lynch had caught the spirit of his patriotic father, and he stood up, like a strong young oak, to breast the storm of the Revolution, then gathering black on every side.

Mr. Lynch's first appearance in public life was at a town meeting called in Charleston in 1773, to consider the injuries Great Britain was inflicting on her colonies. He addressed the numerous assemblage with a patriotic eloquence that won their hearts, and the people at once looked upon him as an efficient instrument in working out the freedom of his country. They elected him by acclimation to many offices of trust, and when the first provincial regiment was raised in South Carolina, in 1775, a captain's commission was offered to Mr. Lynch, which he accepted.

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In company with Captain, afterward General [Charles Cotesworth] Pinckney, he made a recruiting excursion into North Carolina to raise the company he was to command. In this service he was greatly exposed to the inclemencies of the weather and his health received a shock from which it never recovered. He raised his company and joined his regiment, but a few days afterward, intelligence reached him of the sudden and severe illness of his father from paralysis, at Philadelphia, and he asked permission to attend him. But Colonel [Christopher] Gadsden absolutely refused to grant the request on the ground that no private consideration should interfere with public duty. But his filial yearnings were speedily gratified, for his father resigned his seat in Congress and his son was immediately elected by the Provincial Assembly to fill it. He joyfully accepted it, and hastened to Philadelphia where he took his seat in Congress in 1776. He supported the proposition for Independence and was one of the signers to the glorious Declaration thereof.

Mr. Lynch did not long remain in Congress, for the declining health of both himself and his father caused him to resign his seat and return home.

The canker of disease was preying upon his vitals and by the advice of physicians he resolved to go to the south of Europe with the faint hope that restored health might be the result. It being perilous at that time to go in an American vessel there, he sailed for the West Indies toward the close of 1779, with the expectation of finding a neutral vessel there, in which to embark for Europe. His affectionate wife accompanied him, but they never reached their destination. The vessel was supposed to have foundered at sea and all on board perished for it was never heard of afterward.

Thus at the early age of thirty years, terminated the life of one of that sacred band who pledged life, fortune, and honor in defense of American freedom. Like a brilliant meteor, he beamed with splendor for a short period, and suddenly vanished forever.

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13. from the Colony of Georgia:

Button Gwinnett. BUTTON GWINNETT was born in England in 1732. The pecuniary means of his parents were limited, yet they managed to give him a good common education. He was apprenticed to a merchant in Bristol and after completing his term of service; he married, and commenced business on his own account. Allured by the promises of wealth and distinction in America, he resolved to emigrate hither, and he arrived at Charleston in South Carolina in the year 1770. There he commenced mercantile business and after pursuing it for two years, he sold his stock, moved to Georgia, and purchased large tracts of land on St. Catharine's Island in that province. Mr. Gwinnett favored the opposition of the Colonies to British oppression, to some degree, yet he was one of those cautious, doubting men at that time, who viewed the success of the colonies in an open rupture with the home government, as highly problematical.

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Therefore, when in 1774 Georgia was solicited to unite her voice with the other colonies in a General Congress, Mr. Gwinnett looked upon the proposition with disfavor, as one fraught with danger and many evils. But falling in with Doctor Lyman Hall[28] and a few other decided patriots, his judgment became gradually convinced that some powerful movement was necessary, and at length he came out before the people, as one of the warmest advocates of unbending resistance to the British Crown. His cultivated mind and superior talents rendered him very popular with the people as soon as he espoused their cause, and every honor in their gift was speedily bestowed upon him.

It was at the beginning of 1775 that Mr. Gwinnett openly espoused the cause of the patriots and the parish of St. John elected him a delegate to the Continental Congress. In February 1776 he was again elected a delegate to that body by the general assembly of Georgia and under their instructions and in accordance with his own strong inclinations, he voted for the Declaration of Independence and signed it on the second of August following. He remained in Congress until 1777 when he was elected a member of the Convention of his State to form a Constitution in accordance with the recommendation of Congress after the Declaration was made and the grand outlines of that instrument are attributed to Mr. Gwinnett.

Soon after the State Convention adjourned, Mr. Bullock, the president of the council, died and Mr. Gwinnett was elected to that station, then the highest office in the gift of the people. The civil honors, so rapidly and lavishly bestowed upon him, excited his ambition and while he was a representative in Congress, he aspired to the possession of military honors also. He offered himself as a candidate for the office of Brigadier General, and his competitor was Colonel McIntosh, a man highly esteemed for his manly bearing and courageous disposition.

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[28] Lyman Hall was included among the Declaration's signatories in our second presentation, "Men of the Declaration II," in July 2017.

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Mr. Gwinnett was defeated, and with mistaken views he looked upon his rival as a personal enemy. At length he was so … goaded by the thoughts of having his fair fame tarnished, challenged Colonel McIntosh to single combat. They met with pistols and at the first fire both were wounded, Mr. Gwinnett mortally; and in the prime of life, at the early age of forty-five, his life terminated.

Mr. Gwinnett left al wife and several children, but they did not long survive him.

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Addendum:

Beginning on July 4, 1776, fifty-six men wrote their signature on the Declaration of Independence with representatives from all thirteen colonies participating. On September 17, 1787, forty men signed the Constitution of the United States with signatories representing twelve of the original thirteen colonies participating with the State of Rhode Island excepted.

Of the fifty-six men who signed the Declaration, only six affixed their name to the Constitution: Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Robert Morris, Benjamin Franklin, George Clymer, and James Wilson of Pennsylvania, and George Read of Delaware.

Information about each of the thirteen men referenced in this study are excerpted from a book first published in 1848 and reprinted in 1995. Publication data of the book, *Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, and a source for its purchase are posted below:

Benson J. Lossing, Biographical Sketches of the Signers of the Declaration of American Independence (New York: George F. Cooledge & Brother, 1848; repr., Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, WallBuilder Press, 1995).

Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence may be purchased from the following link to Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/Signers-Declaration-Independence-Benson-Lossing/dp/0925279455/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1467312728&sr=1-1&keywords=lives+of+the+signers+of+the+declaration+of+independence+1848

(End 4J18-01: Men of the Declaration III)

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