

MEN OF THE DECLARATION II

INDEPENDENCE DAY SPECIAL

JULY 2, 2017

This Fourth of July is the 241st 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. Except for John Adams, the names of this year's thirteen are relatively unknown, yet to a man, these individuals brought sterling credentials to the debate in Philadelphia. Aristocrats, doctors, lawyers, educators, pastors, 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 is typical of the writing style of the nineteenth century.

1. From the Colony of New Hampshire:



Josiah Bartlett. The ancestors of JOSIAH BARTLETT were from Normandy, whence they emigrated to England. The name was conspicuous in English history at an early date. Toward the close of the seventeenth century a branch of the family emigrated to America, and settled in the town of Beverley, in Massachusetts. Josiah was born in Amesbury, in Massachusetts, in November 1729. His mother's maiden name was Webster, and she was a relative of the family of the great statesmen of that name in our time.

Young Bartlett lacked the advantage of a collegiate education, but he improved an opportunity for acquiring some knowledge of the Greek and Latin, which offered in the family of a relative, the Doctor Webster. He chose for a livelihood the practice of the medical profession, and commenced the study of the science when he was sixteen years old. His opportunities for acquiring knowledge from books was limited, but the active energies of his mind supplied the deficiency, in a measure, and he passed an examination with honor at the close of his studies.

He commenced practice at Kingston, in New Hampshire, and proving skillful and successful, his business soon became lucrative, and he amassed a competency.

Mr. Bartlett was a stern, unbending republican in principle, yet, notwithstanding this, he was highly esteemed by [Benning] Wentworth, the royal governor, and received from him a magistrate's commission, and also the command of a regiment of militia.

In 1765 he was elected a member of the provincial legislature of New Hampshire. It was at that time when the Stamp Act was before the British Parliament, and Mr. Bartlett soon became a prominent leader of a party that opposed the various oppressive measures of the home government. Through Wentworth, magnificent bribes were offered him, but his patriotism was inflexible.

In 1776 he was appointed a member of the Committee of Safety of his State. The governor was alarmed when this committee was appointed, and to prevent the transaction of other business of a like nature, he dissolved the Assembly. They re-assembled in spite of the governor, and Dr. Bartlett was at the head of this rebellious movement. He was soon elected a member of the Continental Congress, and in 1775, Governor Wentworth struck his name from the magistracy list, and deprived him of his military commission. Still he was active in the provincial assembly, and the governor, despairing of reconciliation, and becoming somewhat alarmed for his own safety, left the province. The provincial Congress assumed the reins of government, and immediately re-appointed Dr. Bartlett colonel of militia.

Before actual hostilities commenced, nearly all the colonies were acting independent of the royal governors and their councils, and provincial congresses were organized, which performed all the duties of independent State legislatures.

In August 1775, Dr. Bartlett was again chosen a delegate to the Continental Congress, and was again re-elected in 1776. He was one of the committee appointed to devise a plan for the confederation of States as proposed by Dr. Franklin. He warmly supported the proposition for independence, and when, on the second of August 1776, the members of the Congress signed the Declaration, Dr. Bartlett was the first who affixed his signature, New Hampshire being the first state called. In 1793, Bartlett was elected the first governor of the state under the Federal Constitution.

2. From the Colony of Massachusetts:



John Adams. Born in Braintree (now Quincy), in Massachusetts, on October 13, 1735, and was a direct lineal descendant, in the fourth generation, from Henry Adams, who fled from the persecutions in England during the reign of Charles I.

Archbishop [William] Laud, the spiritual adviser of Charles I took especial pains to enforce the strictest observance of the Liturgy of the established Church of England in the Church of Scotland, and also in the Puritan Churches. Those individuals and congregations who would not conform to these requirements were severely dealt with, and these persecutions drove a great many to the western world, where they might worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences.

Adams's maternal ancestor was John Alden, a passenger in the May-Flower. His primary education was derived in a school at Braintree, and there he passed through a preparatory course of instruction for Harvard University, whence he graduated in 1755 at the age of twenty years.

He was admitted as a barrister in 1761, and he became more publicly active, until 1765, when the Stamp Act had raised a perfect hurricane in America, he wrote and published his "Essay on the Canon and Federal Law."

This production at once placed him high in the popular esteem; and the same year he was associated with James Otis and others, to demand, in the presence of the royal governor, that the courts should dispense with the use of *stamped paper* in the administration of justice.

In 1766 Mr. Adams married Abigail Smith, the amiable daughter of a pious clergyman of Braintree, and soon afterward he removed to Boston. There he was actively associated with [John] Hancock, [James] Otis, and others, in the various measures in favor of the liberties of the people, and was very energetic in endeavors to have the military removed from the town. Governor [Francis] Bernard endeavored to bribe him to silence, at least, by offers of lucrative offices, but they were all rejected with disdain.

On the sixth of May 1776, Mr. Adams introduced a motion in Congress “that the colonies should form governments *independent of the Crown.*” This motion was equivalent to a declaration of independence, and when, a month afterward, Richard Henry Lee introduced a motion more explicitly to declare the colonies free and independent, Mr. Adams was one of its warmest advocates. He was appointed one of the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence. The committee consisted of Dr. [Benjamin] Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Roger Sherman, Robert R. Livingston, and Adams. He placed his signature to the document on the second of August 1776.

He was placed upon the ticket with [George] Washington for Vice President, at the first election under the new Constitution, and was elected to that office. He was re-elected to the same office in 1792, and in 1796, he was chosen to succeed Washington in the Presidential Chair. In 1801 he retired from public office.

In 1818 he lost his wife, with whom he had lived fifty-two years in uninterrupted conjugal felicity. In 1834 he was chosen a member of the convention of Massachusetts to revise the Constitution, and was chosen president of that body, which honor he declined on account of his great age.

In 1825 he had the felicity of seeing his son [John Quincy Adams] elevated to the presidency of the United States. In the spring of 1826 his physical powers rapidly declined, and on the fourth of July of that year, he expired, in the ninety-second year of his. On the very same day, and at nearly the same hour, his fellow-committee-man in drawing up the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, also died. It was the fiftieth anniversary of that glorious act, and the coincidence made a deep impression upon the public mind.

NOTE. On the morning of the fourth it was evident he could not last many hours. On being asked for a toast for the day, the last words he ever uttered—words of glorious import—fell from his lips: “Independence for ever!”

3. From the Colony of Rhode Island:



Stephen Hopkins. STEPHEN HOPKINS was born in the town of Providence, Rhode Island, on March 7, 1707. The town was subsequently divided, and the portion which Mr. Hopkins was born in is now called Scituate \si'-cha-wat\. His mother was the daughter of one of the first Baptist ministers of Providence. The opportunities for acquiring education at the time of Mr. Hopkins' childhood were rare, but his vigorous intellect, in a measure, became a substitute for these opportunities, and he became self-taught, in the truest sense of the word.

Mr. Hopkins was a farmer until 1731, when he removed to Providence and engaged in mercantile business. In 1732, he was chosen a representative for Scituate in the General Assembly, and was re-chosen annually until 1738. He was again elected in 1741, and was chosen speaker of the House of Representatives.

He was elected Governor of the Colony in 1756, and continued in that office almost the whole time, until 1767. He early opposed the oppressive acts of Great Britain, and in 1774, he held three offices of great responsibility, which were conferred upon him by the patriots—namely: Chief Justice of Rhode Island, representative in the Provincial Assembly, and delegate to the Continental Congress.

In 1775, he was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, of Rhode Island, and was again elected a delegate to the General Congress. He was re-elected in 1776, and had the privilege of signing the glorious Declaration of Independence. He was chosen a delegate to the General Congress for the last time, in 1778, and was one of the committee who drafted the ARTICLES OF CONFEDERATION for the government of the States.

He died on the nineteenth of July 1785 in the seventy-eighth year of his age. The life of Mr. Hopkins exhibits a fine example of the rewards of honest, persevering industry. Although his early education was limited, yet he became a distinguished mathematician, and filled almost every public station in the gift of the people, with singular ability. He was a sincere and consistent Christian, and the impress of his profession was upon all his deeds.

4. From the Colony of Connecticut:



William Williams. Wales was the place of nativity of the ancestors of WILLIAM WILLIAMS. They emigrated to America in 1630, and settled at Roxbury, in Massachusetts. His grandfather and father were both ministers of the gospel, and the latter was for more than half a century pastor of a Congregational Society, in Lebanon, Connecticut, where the subject of this brief sketch was born on the eighteenth of April 1731. He entered Harvard College at the age of sixteen years, and at twenty he graduated with honorable distinction in 1751. He then commenced theological studies with his father; but the agitations of the French War attracted his attention, and in 1754 he accompanied his relative, Colonel Ephraim Williams, in an expedition to Lake George, during which the Colonel was killed. He returned home with settled feelings of dislike toward the British officers in general, who haughtily regarded the colonists as inferior men, and deserving of but little of their sympathy.

He abandoned the study of theology, and entered into mercantile pursuits in Lebanon. At the age of twenty-five he was chosen town clerk, which office he held nearly half a century. He was soon afterward chosen a member of the Connecticut Assembly, and forty-five years he held a seat there.

He was always present at its sessions, except when attending to his duties in the General Congress, to which body he was elected a delegate in 1775. He was an ardent supporter of the proposition for Independence, and cheerfully signed the glorious Declaration of Independence.

Many instances are related of the personal sacrifices of Mr. Williams for his country's good. At the commencement of the war he devoted himself to his country's service, and for that purpose he closed his mercantile business, so as not to have any embarrassments. In 1779, when the people had lost all confidence in the final redemption of the continental paper money, and it could not procure supplies for the army, Mr. Williams generously exchanged two thousand dollars in specie for it, and of course lost nearly the whole amount. The Count De Rochambeau \raw-shäⁿ-bō\, with the French army, arrived at Newport during the summer of 1780, as allies to the Americans, but they did not enter into the service until the next year, and remained encamped in New England. Louzon, one of Rochambeau's cavalry officers, encamped during the winter with his legion at Lebanon, and Mr. Williams, in order to allow the officers comfortable quarters, relinquished his own house to them, and moved his family to another. Such was the self-denial of the Fathers of the Republic, and such the noble examples they present.

5. From the Colony of New York:



Francis Lewis. FRANCIS LEWIS was born in Wales, in the town of Landaff in the year 1713. His father was an Episcopal clergyman, his mother was a clergyman's daughter, and Francis was their only child. He was left an orphan when only about five years old, and was taken under the care and protection of a maiden aunt, who watched over him with the apparent solicitude of a mother. He received a portion of his education in Scotland with another relative, and became proficient not only in his native tongue (the ancient Briton¹) but in the Gaelic² language, then mostly used in Scotland. His uncle, Dean of St. Paul's, in London, afterward sent him to Westminster, where he obtained a good education.

At the age of twenty-one he became the possessor of some money, which he invested in merchandise and sailed for New York, in which city he formed a partnership. Leaving a portion of his goods with his associate, he proceeded to Philadelphia with the balance, where he resided for two years. He then returned to New York, and made that his place of business and abode.

¹ "Gaelic: constituting one of a people inhabiting Britain before the Anglo-Saxon invasions beginning in the 6th century AD. The majority were probably Cymric [kim'-rik] Celts [Welsh], who arrived on the island at an unknown date but perhaps beginning as early as the 7th or 6th century BC; they undoubtedly mixed with aborigines who spoke non-Indo-European languages" (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica: Micropaedia* 15th ed. [2010], 2:534).

² "Goidelic: constituting the Goidelic speech of the Celts in Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Scottish Highlands" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.vv. "Gaelic," "Goidelic.")

Mr. Lewis' business increased, and his commercial pursuits kept him much of his time in Europe until the opening of the "French and Indian War," in which he was an active partisan. He was the aid of Colonel [James] Mercer at Oswego, when that fort was captured by [General Louis-Joseph] Montcalm in August 1757. Mercer was slain, and Lewis was carried with other prisoners, to Canada. Thence he was sent to France, and was finally exchanged. At the close of the war, five thousand acres of land were given him by the British government as a compensation for his services.

Mr. Lewis was distinguished for his republican views, and he was elected one of the delegates for New York in the Colonial Congress of 1765. When the Stamp Act became a law, and non-importation agreements nearly ruined commerce, he retired from business to his country residence on Long Island.

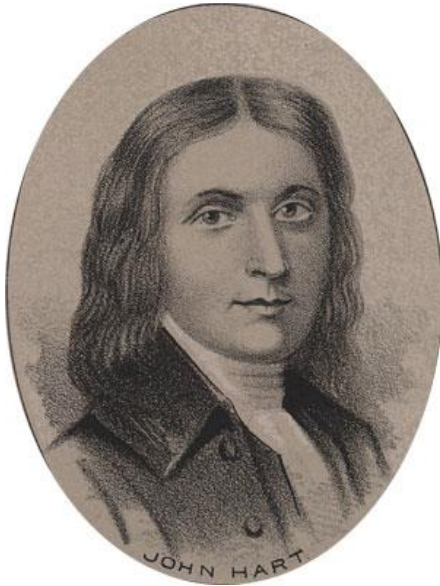
In 1775 he was elected a delegate to the General Congress, by the convention of deputies from several counties of New York. He was also elected a delegate for 1776, by the Provincial Assembly, and he became one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, in August of that year.

Mr. Lewis was a shining mark for the resentment of the British and Tories, and while the former possessed Long Island, they not only destroyed his property, but had the brutality to confine his wife in a close prison for several months, without bed or a change of raiment, whereby her constitution was ruined, and she died two years afterward.

The party names of *Whig* and *Tory* were first used in New York, in 1774, and rapidly spread throughout the Colonies. The name of Tory was applied to American royalists, and the name of Whig was assumed by the patriots. The origin of the word Tory is not clear. It was first used in Ireland in the time of Charles II. Sir Richard Phillips defines the two parties thus: "Those are *Whigs* who would curb the power of the Crown; those are *Tories* who would curb the power of the people."

Having attained to the ripe age of nearly ninety years, and honored by the universal reverence and esteem of his countrymen, Mr. Lewis departed this life on the thirtieth of December 1803.

6. From the Colony of New Jersey:



John Hart. One of the most unbending patriots of the Revolution was JOHN HART, the New Jersey farmer. His father, Edward Hart, was also thrifty farmer, and a loyal subject of his King. In 1759 he raised a volunteer corps, which he named “The Jersey Blues,” and joined [British General James] Wolfe at Quebec in time to see that hero fall, but the English victorious. He then retired to his farm, and ever afterward held a high place in the esteem and confidence of the people. The time of the birth of his son John is not on record, and but few incidents of his early life are known. Mr. [John] Hart pursued the avocation of his father, and was in quite independent circumstances when the Stamp Act and its train of evils attracted his attention, and aroused his sympathies for his oppressed countrymen in Boston, and elsewhere, where the heel of tyranny was planted. Although living in the secluded agricultural district of Hopewell, in Hunterdon county, yet he was fully conversant with the movements of public affairs at home and abroad, and he united with others in electing delegates to the Continental Congress that convened in New York city, in 1765. From that time, until the opening scenes of the war, John Hart was active in promoting the cause of freedom; and his fellow citizens manifested their appreciation of his services, by electing him a delegate to the first Continental Congress in 1774. He was, however, elected a member of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey, and was Vice President of that body.

The talents of Mr. Hart were considered too valuable to the public, to remain in an inactive state, and in February 1776 he was again elected a delegate to the General Congress. He was too deeply impressed with the paramount importance of his country's claims, to permit him to refuse the office; and he took his seat again in that body, and voted for and signed the Declaration of Independence.

Nothing would have seemed more inimical to Mr. Hart's private interests, than this act, which was the harbinger of open hostilities, for his estate was peculiarly exposed to the fury of the enemy. Nor was that fury withheld when New Jersey was invaded by the British and their mercenary allies, the Hessians. The signers of the Declaration everywhere were marked for vengeance and when the enemy made their conquering descent upon New Jersey, Mr. Hart's estate was among the first to feel the effects of the desolating inroad.

Mr. Hart's family, having timely warning of the approach of the enemy in pursuit of Washington, fled to a place of safety. His farm was ravaged, his timber destroyed, his cattle and stock butchered for the use of the British army, and he himself was hunted like a noxious beast, not daring to remain two nights under the same roof. And it was not until Washington's success at the battle of Trenton, that this dreadful state of himself and family was ended.

The blight fell, not only upon his fortune, but upon his person, and he did not live to see the sunlight of Peace and Independence gladden the face of his country. He died in the year 1780 (the gloomiest period of the War for Independence), full of years and deserved honors.