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The Declaration of Independence

In Congress, July 4, 1776

The Declaration of Independence of the United States of America

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security. --Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies; and such

is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former Systems of Government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute Tyranny over these States. To prove this, let Facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public good.

He has forbidden his Governors to pass Laws of immediate and pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation till his Assent should be obtained; and when so suspended, he has utterly neglected to attend to them.

He has refused to pass other Laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of Representation in the Legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only.

He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable, and distant from the depository of their Public Records, for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures.

He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people.

He has refused for a long time, after such dissolutions, to cause others to be elected; whereby the Legislative Powers, incapable of Annihilation, have returned to the People at large for their exercise; the State remaining in the mean time exposed to all the dangers of invasion from without, and convulsions within.

He has endeavoured to prevent the population of these States; for that purpose obstructing the Laws of Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to

pass others to encourage their migration hither, and raising the conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.

He has obstructed the Administration of Justice, by refusing his Assent to Laws for establishing Judiciary Powers.

He has made judges dependent on his Will alone, for the tenure of their offices, and the amount and payment of their salaries.

He has erected a multitude of New Offices, and sent hither swarms of Officers to harass our People, and eat out their substance.

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures.

He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.

He has combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws; giving his Assent to their Acts of pretended legislation:

For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us:

For protecting them, by a mock Trial, from Punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States:

For cutting off our Trade with all parts of the world:

For imposing taxes on us without our Consent:

For depriving us, in many cases, of the benefits of Trial by Jury:

For transporting us beyond Seas to be tried for pretended offences:

For abolishing the free System of English Laws in a neighbouring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government, and enlarging its Boundaries so as to render it at once an example and fit instrument for introducing the same absolute rule into these Colonies:

For taking away our Charters, abolishing our most valuable Laws, and altering fundamentally the Forms of our Governments:

For suspending our own Legislatures, and declaring themselves invested with Power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever.

He has abdicated Government here, by declaring us out of his Protection and waging War against us.

He has plundered our seas, ravaged our Coasts, burnt our towns, and destroyed the lives of our people.

He is at this time transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to compleat the works of death, desolation and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of Cruelty perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy of the Head of a civilized nation.

He has constrained our fellow Citizens taken Captive on the high Seas to bear Arms against their Country, to become the executioners of their friends and Brethren, or to fall themselves by their Hands.

He has excited domestic insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions.

In every stage of these Oppressions We have Petitioned for Redress in the most humble terms: Our repeated Petitions have been answered only by

repeated injury. A Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free People.

Nor have We been wanting in attention to our British brethren. We have warned them from time to time of attempts by their legislature to extend an unwarrantable jurisdiction over us. We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here. We have appealed to their native justice and magnanimity, and we have conjured them by the ties of our common kindred to disavow these usurpations, which would inevitably interrupt our connections and correspondence. They too have been deaf to the voice of justice and of consanguinity. We must, therefore, acquiesce in the necessity, which denounces our Separation, and hold them, as we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends.

We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the Name, and by the Authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare, That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as Free and Independent States, they have full Power to levy War, conclude Peace, contract Alliances, establish Commerce, and to do all other Acts and Things which Independent States may of right do. And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.

John Hancock (*Massachusetts*)

New Hampshire:

Josiah Bartlett, William Whipple, Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts:

John Hancock, Samuel Adams, John Adams, Robert Treat Paine, Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island:

Stephen Hopkins, William Ellery

Connecticut:

Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, William Williams, Oliver Wolcott

New York:

William Floyd, Philip Livingston, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris

New Jersey:

Richard Stockton, John Witherspoon, Francis Hopkinson, John Hart, Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania:

Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, Benjamin Franklin, John Morton, George Clymer, James Smith, George Taylor, James Wilson, George Ross

Delaware:

Caesar Rodney, George Read, Thomas McKean

Maryland:

Samuel Chase, William Paca, Thomas Stone, Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia:

George Wythe, Richard Henry Lee, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Harrison, Thomas Nelson, Jr., Francis Lightfoot Lee, Carter Braxton

North Carolina:

William Hooper, Joseph Hewes, John Penn

South Carolina:

Edward Rutledge, Thomas Heyward, Jr., Thomas Lynch, Jr., Arthur Middleton

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett, Lyman Hall, George Walton

A Brief Description of the Signers

Connecticut:

Samuel Huntington (c. 1731-1796): He was a self-made man who distinguished himself in government on the State and national levels. He was the President of Congress from 1779-1781, and he 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 (c. 1723-1793): He 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 1774-1781; 1783-1784 and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and represented Connecticut in the United States Senate from 1791-1793.

William Williams (c. 1731-1811): He was a graduate of Harvard, studied theology with his father and eventually became a successful merchant. He fought in the French-Indian War and returned to Lebanon, Connecticut where he served for forty-four years as the town clerk. He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1776-1777, and after signing the Declaration of Independence; he was a member of the committee that was instrumental in framing the Articles of Confederation. He was a delegate to vote on the ratification of the Federal Constitution and served as a Judge of the Windham County Courthouse.

Oliver Wolcott (c. 1726-1797): He 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 again from 1784-1789. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1775-1776, and 1778-1784, Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut from 1786-1796, and Governor from 1796-1797.

Delaware:

Thomas McKean (c. 1734-1817): He was the last member of the Second Continental Congress to sign the Declaration of Independence. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1774-1781 and served as a delegate to the Congress of the Confederation from 1781-1783. After 1783, he became involved in the politics of Pennsylvania becoming 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.

George Read (c. 1733-1798): He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1774-1776, and was a member of the Delaware Constitutional Convention in 1776, acting Governor of Delaware in 1777, a Judge on the Court of Appeals in 1780, State Senator from 1791-1792, and a United States Senator from 1789-1793. He was Chief Justice of the State of Delaware from 1793-1798.

Caesar Rodney (c. 1728-1784): He was interested in military affairs and was involved in action in Delaware and New Jersey during the Revolutionary War. He was reelected to Congress in 1777, and was nominated as State president from 1778-1781. He died in 1784 while serving as Speaker of the Upper House of the Delaware Assembly.

Georgia:

Button Gwinnett (c. 1735-1777): He served as the Acting Governor of Georgia for two months after the Governor died in 1777, but did not achieve reelection. His life was one of economic and political disappointment. He dies as the result of a duel outside Savannah, Georgia,

he was one of three of the founding fathers who were killed in duels; the other two were Alexander Hamilton, and Richard Dobbs Spaight.

Lyman Hall (c. 1724-1790): He was one of four signers trained as a minister and was a graduate of Princeton College. During his life, he also served as a doctor, governor, and planter. During the Revolutionary War, his property was destroyed and he was accused of treason. He left Georgia and spent time in South Carolina and Connecticut to escape prosecution. When the war was over, he went back to Georgia and began to practice medicine. He served as Governor of Georgia from 1783-1784.

George Walton (c. 1741-1804): He was elected to the Continental Congress in 1776, 1777, 1780, and 1781, Colonel of the First Georgia Militia in 1778, Governor of Georgia from 1779-1780. He was Chief Justice of the State Superior Court of Georgia from 1783-89, a presidential elector in 1789, Governor of Georgia from 1789-1790, and a United States Senator from 1795-1796. During the Revolutionary War, Walton was captured by the British in 1778 during the attack on Savannah and released within the year. He was the founder of the Richmond Academy and Franklin College, which later became the University of Georgia.

Maryland:

Charles Carroll (c. 1737-1832): He was one of the wealthiest men in America and was the oldest and longest surviving signer of the Declaration. From 1789-1792 he served as one of Maryland's two United States Senators. He retired from politics in 1804 and spent the rest of his life managing his 80,000 acres of land in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York.

Samuel Chase (c. 1741-1811): He was called the "Demosthenes of Maryland" for his oratorical skills. In 1785, he represented Maryland at the Mt. Vernon conference to settle a dispute between Maryland and Virginia concerning navigation rights on the Potomac River. He served as an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1796-1811. He

was the only Supreme Court justice to be impeached in 1805. He was charged with discriminating against supporters of Thomas Jefferson, but he was found to be not guilty.

William Paca (c. 1740-1799): He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1774-78, appointed Chief Justice of Maryland in 1778, Governor of Maryland from 1782-1785 and Federal District Judge for the State of Maryland from 1789-99. He was also a planter and a lawyer, but was a relatively minor figure in national affairs. He also served as a delegate to the Maryland ratification convention for the Federal Constitution.

Thomas Stone (c. 1743-1787): He was elected to the Congress from 1775-78, and again in 1783. He was chosen to be a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia in 1787, but had to decline because of the poor health of his wife. Shortly after, she died in 1787, and in grief, he died a few months later.

Massachusetts:

John Adams (c. 1735-1826): He was the first Vice-President of the United States and the second President. He was the first President to attend Harvard University and the first to have a son become President.

Samuel Adams (c. 1722-1803): He served in the Continental Congress until 1781 and was a member of the Massachusetts State Senate from 1781-1788. He was opposed to a stronger national government; Adams refused to attend the Constitutional Convention in 1787. He served as Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts from 1789-1793, and Governor from 1794-1797.

Elbridge Gerry (c. 1744-1814): He 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, at the end 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 in 1811 he died in office.

John Hancock (c. 1737-1793): He was the President of the Second Continental Congress when the Declaration of Independence was adopted. He, along with Samuel Adams, was the two most wanted men in the colonies by King George III. He served as a major general during the Revolutionary War. He was elected Governor of Massachusetts from 1780-1785, and 1787 until his death in 1793.

Robert Treat Paine (c. 1731-1814): He was elected to the Continental Congress, in 1774, and 1776, Attorney General for Massachusetts from 1777-1796, Judge, Supreme Court of Massachusetts from 1796-1804, and State Counselor in 1804. During his time in Congress, Paine concentrated primarily on military and Indian concerns. Paine was one of the original founders of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

New Hampshire:

Josiah Bartlett (c. 1729-1795): He 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).

Matthew Thornton (c. 1714-1803): He was as Speaker of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, was an Associate Justice of the Superior Court, and was elected to the Continental Congress in 1776. He was one of six members who signed the Declaration of Independence after it was adopted by the Continental Congress. He left Congress to return to New Hampshire to become an Associate Justice of the State Superior Court. He spent his remaining years farming and operating a ferry on the Merrimack River.

William Whipple (c. 1730-1785): He was a former sea captain who commanded troops during the Revolutionary War, and was a member of the Continental Congress from 1776-1779. He was a State legislator in New Hampshire from 1780-1784, Associate Justice of the New Hampshire Superior Court from 1782-1785, and a receiver for finances for the Congress of the Confederation. He suffered from heart problems and died while traveling his court circuit in 1785.

New Jersey:

Abraham Clark (c. 1726-1794): He was a farmer, surveyor, and politician who spent most of his life in public service. He was a member of the New Jersey State legislature, represented his State at the Annapolis Convention in 1786, and was opposed to the Constitution until it incorporated a bill of rights. He served in the United States Congress for two terms from 1791 until his death in 1794.

John Hart (c. 1711-1779): He became the Speaker of the Lower House of the New Jersey State legislature. His property was destroyed by the British during the course of the Revolutionary War, and his wife died three months after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. During the ravaging of his home, he spent time in the Sourland Mountains in central New Jersey in exile.

Francis Hopkinson (c. 1737-1791): He was a judge and lawyer by profession but also was a musician and composer, poet, artist, essayist, and inventor. When the Revolutionary War was over, he became one of the most respected writers in the country. He was later appointed Judge to the U.S. Court for the District of Pennsylvania in 1790.

Richard Stockton (c. 1730-1781): He was trained to be a lawyer and graduated from the College of New Jersey. He was elected to the Continental Congress in 1776, and was the first of the New Jersey delegation to sign the Declaration of Independence. In November 1776, he was captured by the British and was eventually released in 1777 in very

poor physical condition. His home at Morven, New Jersey was destroyed by the British during the war and he died in 1781 at the age of 50.

John Witherspoon (c. 1723-1794): He was the only active clergyman among the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1776-1782, 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).

New York:

William Floyd (c. 1734-1821): He had his estate in New York destroyed by the British and Loyalists during the Revolutionary War. He was a member of the United States Congress from 1789-1791, and was a presidential elector from New York four times. He was later a major general in the New York militia and served as a State senator.

Francis Lewis (c. 1713-1802): He was one who really 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.

Philip Livingston (c. 1716-1778): He was not in Philadelphia to vote on the resolution for Independence, but did sign the actual Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776. During the Revolutionary War, the British used Livingston's houses in New York as a navy hospital and a barracks for the troops. He was the third signer to die after John Morton of Pennsylvania and Button Gwinnett of Georgia.

Lewis Morris (c. 1726-1798): He was a delegate to the Continental Congress, from 1775-1777, a county judge in Worchester, New York from 1777-1778, served in the New York State legislature from 1777-1781 and 1784-1788, and he was a member of the Board of Regents of the University

of the State of New York. During the Revolutionary War, he was a brigadier-general in the New York State militia, and all three of his sons served under General George Washington.

North Carolina:

John Hewes (c. 1730-1779): He was a merchant who was one of the most conservative signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was a graduate of Princeton College, and he along with John Adams helped to establish the Continental Navy. He was a member of the State legislature from 1778-1779, and was eventually reelected to the Continental Congress. He died a month after his reelection.

William Hooper (c. 1742-1790): He was a graduate of Harvard College, and was highly successful in law and politics. He resigned from Congress to return to North Carolina because of his family situation and financial difficulties. During the war, he was separated from his family for ten months and his property was destroyed. After the war, he was elected to the State legislature and served there through 1786.

John Penn (c. 1740-1788): He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1775-77 and 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.

Pennsylvania:

George Clymer (c. 1739-1813): He had a great deal of financial talent and signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. His home was vandalized by the British in 1777 during the American Revolutionary War. He served in the Pennsylvania State legislature from 1784-1788, and he was a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1789-1791. He was later appointed as “collector of taxes” on alcoholic beverages in Pennsylvania from 1791-1794.

Benjamin Franklin (c. 1706-1790): He helped to negotiate the Treaty of Alliance with France in 1778 and the Treaty of Paris which ended the Revolutionary War in 1783. He was one of the framers of the Constitution, and the only man who signed all three documents of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Treaty with France. He was also elected President of the Pennsylvania Society for the Promoting of the Abolition of Slavery.

Robert Morris (c. 1734-1806): He was a 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.

John Morton (c. 1725-1777): He was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence to die and was one of nine signers from Pennsylvania. He was elected to the Second Continental Congress from 1774-77, and was the Chairman of the committee that reported the Articles of Confederation. He contracted an inflammatory fever and died in Ridley Park, Delaware County, Pennsylvania in April 1777, and is buried in St. Paul's Burial Ground in Chester, Pennsylvania.

George Ross (c. 1730-1779): He was elected to the Second Continental Congress from 1776-1777, was a colonel in the Continental Army in 1776; was Vice President of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention in 1776, and Judge of the Admiralty Court of Pennsylvania in 1779. He was not a member of Congress when it voted for independence on July 2, 1776, because of illness, he was forced to resign his seat in Congress in 1777.

Benjamin Rush (c. 1745-1813): He was elected to the Continental Congress in 1776, appointed Surgeon General in the Middle Department of the Continental Army in 1777, instructor, and physician at the University of Pennsylvania in 1778. He was the Treasurer of the U.S. Mint from 1779-1813, and professor of Medical Theory and Clinical Practice at the University of Pennsylvania from 1791-1813. He was the most well-known doctor and medical instructor in the United States. He was a trustee of Dickinson College, helped to found the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, and was a member of the American Philosophical Society.

James Smith (c. 1719-1806): He was elected to the Continental Congress on July 20, 1776 after the votes had been taken on the resolution for independence and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. From 1779-1782 he held a number of State offices including one term in the State legislature and a few months as a Judge of the State High Court of Appeals. He was also appointed a brigadier general in the Pennsylvania militia in 1782.

George Taylor (c. 1716-1781): He came to the colonies as an indentured servant and eventually was an Ironmaster at the Warwick Furnace and Coventry Forge. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1775-1777. He returned to Pennsylvania and was elected to the new Supreme Executive Assembly, but served for a very short period because of illness and financial difficulties. His Durham Furnace manufactured ammunition for the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War.

James Wilson (c. 1742-1798): He was elected to the Congress from 1775-77 and 1785-87, chosen to be one of the directors of the Bank of North America in 1781, a member of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and appointed by President George Washington to be an Associate Justice to the US. Supreme Court from 1789-1798. He experienced personal and financial difficulty in his later years and spent time in debtor's prison while serving on the Supreme Court.

Rhode Island:

William Ellery (c. 1727-1820): He served 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.

Stephen Hopkins (c. 1707-1785): He was the second oldest signer of the Declaration of Independence (next to Benjamin Franklin). He served on the committee that was responsible for the creation of the Articles of Confederation. He resigned from the Congress in 1776 because of his health, but later he was elected to the State legislature of Rhode Island upon his return.

South Carolina:

Thomas Heyward, Jr. (c. 1746-1809): He was a planter and lawyer, and was one of three signers from South Carolina captured and imprisoned by the British. He signed the Articles of Confederation while a member of the Continental Congress. 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. He became the first President of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina.

Thomas Lynch, Jr. (c. 1749-1779): He was a planter who was the youngest signer of the Declaration of Independence to die at the age of thirty. He was trained as a lawyer and graduated from Cambridge University in England, and was elected to the Second Continental Congress to carry on the duties of his ill father. Thomas Lynch Sr. and Thomas Lynch Jr. were the only father and son team to serve concurrently in the Continental Congress. Thomas Lynch, Jr. and his wife were on a voyage to France in 1779 when their ship was lost at sea.

Arthur Middleton (c. 1742-1787): He was chosen to replace his more conservative father in the Continental Congress in 1776, but failed to attend most of the sessions. He was captured by the British and was held captive for over a year in St. Augustine, Florida. During the time of his incarceration, the British destroyed most of his property. After his release in 1781, Middleton returned to politics, he served in the Virginia State legislature, and was a trustee of the College of Charleston.

Edward Rutledge (c. 1749-1800): He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1774-76 and 1779, a captain in the Charleston Battalion of Artillery from 1776-1779, a State legislator from 1782-1798, College of Electors in the presidential elections of 1788, 1792, 1796, and elected Governor for South Carolina in 1798. He was the youngest of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. During the Revolutionary War, Rutledge was a military captain involved in the campaigns at Port Royal Island and Charleston, South Carolina. He was captured by the British in 1780 and held as a prisoner until 1781. From 1782-1798, he was a member of the State legislature and was elected Governor in 1798.

Virginia:

Carter Braxton (c. 1736-1797): He was elected to the Virginia State legislature after the signing of the Declaration of Independence and served on the Governor's Executive Council. The American Revolutionary War caused him great hardship and he died in financial ruin in Richmond, Virginia.

Benjamin Harrison (c. 1726-1791): He was the father of President William Henry Harrison and great-grandfather of President Benjamin Harrison. He was the Speaker of the Lower House of the Virginia State legislature from 1777-1781, and served three terms as Governor of Virginia from 1781-1783. He was originally in opposition of the new Federal Constitution, but later favored it when it was decided to add a bill of rights.

Thomas Jefferson (c. 1743-1826): He was the chief author of the Declaration of Independence. He was a member of the Virginia House of Delegates from 1776-79, elected Governor of Virginia in 1779 and 1780. He was the Associate Envoy to France in 1784, Minister to the French Court in 1785, United States Secretary of State from 1789-1793, Vice President of the United States from 1791-1801, President of the United States from 1801-1809, and established the University of Virginia in 1810. He was one of the most brilliant men of his time. Thomas Jefferson chose this inscription on his tombstone: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for religious freedom, and father of the University of Virginia." He considered these three things, The Declaration of Independence, religious freedom, and higher learning to be his most valuable contributions to mankind, and is what he wanted to be remembered for, no mention of the fact that was also a diplomat, Vice-President, and President of the United States.

Francis Lightfoot Lee (c. 1734-1797): He was the younger brother of Richard Henry Lee (see below). 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.

Richard Henry Lee (c. 1732-1794): He 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 was initially opposed to the Constitution because it lacked a bill of rights, but he was elected Senator from Virginia from 1789-1792. However, Lee he resigned in 1792 due to poor health.

Thomas Nelson, Jr. (c. 1738-1789): He had his Congressional career shortened because of health problems. He served as the commanding General of the Lower Virginia Militia during the Revolutionary War. He was a delegate to the Continental Congress from 1775-77, and 1779, and he

was elected Governor of Virginia in 1781 after Thomas Jefferson declined reelection. He spent his remaining years handling his business affairs.

George Wythe (c. 1726-1806): He was more well-known as being a classical scholar who taught such great men as Thomas Jefferson and James Monroe. He was elected to the Continental Congress from 1775-1776, Speaker of the Virginia House from 1777-78, and judge of the Chancery Court of Virginia from 1789-1806. He was also appointed the first chair of law at the College of William and Mary. He died mysteriously in 1806, perhaps by being poisoned.

Our Unalienable Rights

Written by Larry M. Jaynes:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The above is the first sentence of the second paragraph from The Declaration of Independence, and it is self-evident to people, instinctively, that all men are created equal, and God is the Creator.

All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, some of which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Still, these are not all of our unalienable rights. It is interesting to me to find the word *unalienable* used in so many books relating to our independence, transposed, or rather mistranslated into the word *inalienable*; “inalienable” means not transferable. However, “unalienable” means not to be separated, or taken away!

Someone may think, *Oh well, what is the difference anyway?* Unalienable means that our God-given rights are inseparable from any aspect of our lives, and was to be handed down not only to us, but to our posterity as well, while inalienable infers that the rights cease to exist with the framers and the generation of the time when the Declaration of Independence was written. Unalienable literally prevents separating our personal religious beliefs from our conscious decision regarding politics, or anything else that we pursue in our lives.

It is like this example, to hold a baseball in one's glove is like the word *inalienable*, because the subject (as a single person) has possession of the baseball but he has no one to pass the baseball to. While *unalienable* is that

the subject (as a team player) passes the baseball along to another catcher who throws it to another and so on down the line, thus, allowing the game to continue. Therefore, to hold is *inalienable*, and to release is *unalienable*.

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

This above is the Preamble of the Constitution, and explains the reason for the document's construction and writing. Let us draw our attention to the phrase, *and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity* where it is observable that this was written to highlight that *Unalienable rights* were to be preserved not only to that living generation, but were to be extended and secured for their *Posterity* which includes us today and *our Posterity* tomorrow.

The Declaration of Independence was written to help initiate and preserve our freedom without fears and threats from any government, to enjoy our union with the Creator and to thoroughly experience our God-given unalienable rights. The men who wrote the Declaration of Independence concluded it with this sentence: *And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of DIVINE PROVIDENCE [God], we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.* They laid their very lives, fortunes, and honor on the line to secure for us today the Divine Providence of God's protection.

Following is a statement of Benjamin Franklin: . . . *In the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room [where they were writing the Constitution] for the divine protection. Our prayers, Sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future*

national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful Friend or do we imagine that we no longer needed His assistance? What an amazing statement to make during the framing of our Constitution, to recall to the minds of the delegates that it was by the Divine Providence from our powerful heavenly Friend, Who is the Creator of heaven and earth, that freedom was secured so that they could continue on the course of freedom with God as their stronghold and refuge, and that they, as well as we, need His assistance in life.

Complacency and apathy towards the Declaration of Independence have been growing considerably, and it is only because of God's grace that America is still free. I do not believe all is lost by any means, for we still have God's blessings of liberty upon our country, and upon our very souls.

Today we do not necessarily pledge our fortunes and very lives. Rather, we simply enjoy the pledge and the fruit of their labors. Did you know that in most (not all) cases that when someone earns a fortune by hard work that their heirs usually end up spending it all by the third generation? The reason why is because they never earned it in the first place! They only enjoyed having it given to them based on the labor of others and a birthright. This is similar to Americans of today, all we have is what our founding fathers gave to us, and thankfully and with the Divine Providence of God Almighty, we still, generations later, enjoy the labors of the past as our birthright!

I heard once that if the founders of the Constitution could return today, they would be sickened by the way our country functions; however, I do not believe that for one second, they could never had fathomed that their work would still be providing the foundational principles that are upholding America all these many years hence.

We still live in the greatest country in the world because the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. These great documents were founded upon allowing the Father of Lights to have His

place in our hearts (without fear), so we could freely enjoy His healing Word and allow His Word to have free course, being completely unfettered by our society.

We still live in the greatest place to be examples of the love of God to the world.

We today are blessed because of God's blessings upon America, and we do live with God in Christ in our hearts as examples of how to live as a Christian, and as Christian families.

When we secured our independence from Great Britain, America blazed the secured trail to the heart of God's divine will for all men.

Today God thrives in the lives of His children and we can enjoy our lives with Him without fear.

Psalms 34:4:

I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

His blessings that began to be multiplied with our forefathers and upon our land have continued growing even to this present day with Our Unalienable Rights in the same way that Ezekiel expressed:

Ezekiel 34:26-37:

-26: And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season; there shall be showers of blessing.

-27: And the tree of the fields shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.

Proclamations for Thanksgiving

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln

Proclamation of National Thanksgiving, City of New York, October 3, 1789

By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation.

Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor, and whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me “to recommend to the People of the United States a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness.”

Now therefore I do recommend and assign Thursday the 26th day of November next to be devoted by the People of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be. That we may then all unite in rendering unto him our sincere and humble thanks, for his kind care and protection of the People of this Country previous to their becoming a Nation, for the signal and manifold mercies, and the favorable interpositions of his providence, which we experienced in the course and conclusion of the late war, for the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed, for the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness, and particularly the national One now lately instituted, **for the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed** [emphasis supplied]; and the means we have of acquiring and diffusing useful

knowledge; and in general for all the great and various favors which he hath been pleased to confer upon us.

And also that we may then unite in most humbly offering our prayers and supplications to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations and beseech him to pardon our national and other transgressions, to enable us all, whether in public or private stations, to perform our several and relative duties properly and punctually, to render our national government a blessing to all the people, by constantly being a Government of wise, just, and constitutional laws, discreetly and faithfully executed and obeyed, to protect and guide all Sovereigns and Nations (especially such as have shown kindness unto us) and to bless them with good government, peace, and concord. To promote the knowledge and practice of true religion and virtue, and the encrease of science among them and Us, and generally to grant unto all Mankind such a degree of temporal prosperity as he alone knows to be best.

Given under my hand at the City of New York the third day of October in the year of our Lord 1789.

Go [George]. Washington

~Abraham Lincoln, October 3, 1863 ~

“The year that is drawing toward its close, has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God... I do therefore invite my fellow citizens in every part of the United States, and also who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next, as a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens. . .”

An Episode in America's Freedom

Written by Larry M. Jaynes:

(The following is a bonus excerpt from a former study that was titled "**Episodes in America's Freedom, Part One: Reflections in Common Sense, Logic, and Reason.** . . .)

" . . . We highlight and bear witness to one of the most astounding epics in America's history that displays the single greatest event of all time about one of the most peaceable transformations of power and government that has ever transpired in a society since man was expelled from Paradise. The United States exchanged its form of government from one form of laws, principles, rules, and constitution (The Articles of Confederation) to a completely different form of government, effortlessly (The Constitution of the United States).

This episode in America's history all came forward without any armies forming, without a signal cannon being lit, without a musket being fired, without a sword being drawn, without a single leader being forcibly replaced, imprisoned, or hung on the gallows, without the formation of any firing squads, without a drop of blood being spilt, and no one had to go into exile. The only activity was unnoticeably held behind closed doors as a series of vigorous debates over words, principles, and semantics while a more perfect union was being formed from principled reason into notes and then painstakingly constructed onto a sheet of parchment and collectively signed by its participants.

The weapons that were used to make this metamorphosis possible were the iron pen and ink, simply by connecting the right words together detailing the way to a more perfect union of and for man and country that would

stand the test of time. The battlefield in this amazing epic was first, the human mind; then, the very land they represented and stood upon, and the victory won was awarded to all of the people in America. Yet this incredible drama has slipped through history almost unknown and unappreciated by many people of the contemporary generation because these are not generally school or public square or water cooler subjects any longer.

So astounding was the event, so impossible was the result that it shook the halls in legal chambers around the world and left them in speechless awe so that the event could only be categorized as a miracle, and miracles cannot happen without the phenomenal Providence of the Supreme Being's intervention. This intervention we may examine in the actual words, this miracle we may comprehend, and the outcome and prize offered and received we may evaluate and enjoy through understanding its parts that form the whole vision of liberty offered and received. The forming of a new government and adding its Bill of Rights in December, 1791 to the one page document only took only twenty-three minutes to read aloud.

The event happened in an age when all the stars lined up and shined down upon a small group of men for a very brief moment in history, between Friday, May 25, 1787, and Monday, September 17, 1787, whereon they signed the new document. This inspiring light showed the way for a unique group of men gathered in the State House in Philadelphia where inspiration and sound thinking stimulated the human heart to reach for and grasp, as a collective body, the foundations of excellence, a more perfect union.

Upon this foundation, they formed and built, word by word and line by line, understandable reason that composed a new formula for government, unequalled in the world, before or since. Dare anyone say that they brought political science to its zenith? Yes, I dare to say so because it is true, and it has remained settled science since its inception! So true that they put the

formulas down on paper in easy to read prose, phrases, and articles that worked every time from then to the present, no matter who performs the experiments (i.e., the American experiment applied by the “individual or the collective citizen equally”). Nothing this grand was so realized aforetime, nothing so marvelous was previously given to govern in the affairs of man, and nothing so splendid will ever come this way again. . .

The principles and protocols in their schematics were applicable for a strong government and equally pliable for a vibrant, exceptional, and hopeful people. Their labors produced momentous mechanisms of governing-liberty for the group and for the individual, for the rich and for the poor, for the young and for the old, for the educated and for the uneducated, and these instruments of laws and rights distributed powers more fairly and equally to all in every geographical location within its borders, whether secular or religious — all were awarded freedom’s joys and blessings of liberty.

Out of chaos, the newly designed principles brought forth freedom, peace, and order amidst the dire-straits of a broken, powerless system. Out of foreign and domestic threats, and financial destruction, the freshly drawn up schematics distributed trust, confidence, prosperity, and safety to its populace. Out of insecurity and obscurity, the iron pen crafted and etched out filigrees of palatable liberty, clarity of justice, light amid an encroaching darkness while all the while personal rights sprouted in the hearts of the hopeful recipients.

Out of confusion, the proof of their protocols delivered order, sanity, and a viable guide to govern nation and self with unequalled tranquility. These new treaties lead man’s inner aspirations out to the light of creativity as a free-spirited procession of discovery of human potential began emerging under the security of free-willed liberty to rise and amend depleted hopes back into renewed, obtainable reality. This started a revival that to this day still inspires the world at large.

What was this formula that the world had never seen or experienced before, that worked so amazingly, and that brought the nation out of darkness? It was the Constitution of the United States — this was man's Miracle received; the hope of the whole world was realized in one, threepart document for We the People.

Perhaps the greatest feat of all time in American history was the process that lead us to the result that the founders' labor produced; specifically, a governing document that shaped a more perfect union. This unified government blossomed purely from the purposeful methods born out of the founders' eagerness to work together as they collectively with one mind and heart revolved purely around uncontaminated reason to obtain our more perfect union.

Monumental was the task before them (monumental is the task still before us to sustain Mother Liberty); you see, it is nearly impossible to get five equally reasonable men to agree on any one subject, yet they, as a collective group did, and they did so for over one-hundred days. Greater than fifty men commenced and entered into the fair-minded challenge for America's future at a time when they were the world's laughing stock because although they won the war of independence they were losing the peace as factions within America were dividing the country into parts and pieces and powers from without were trying to stake claim to them as well. The framers were the last hope of millions (and hundreds of millions to come), and they succeeded more so than they realized upon the day of signing the Constitution over to the Continental Congress, the States, and the people for judgment and ratification.

And an amazing thing happened; they the people gave we the people the same gem they formulated and the whole populous were and still are drawn along into a perfect confluence of their reason. Thankfully these men debated over the document's details rather than talking themselves out of the document and we to this very day became the living links back to the convention that originally assembled in the city of love, and its

outcomes still live to caress us in our own personal abodes. On that blissful day of ratification on June 21, 1788, they cloned that time for us to experience because we still live in the same, most excellent experiment of the ages.

The framers possessed an amazing capacity to overcome political differences and personal indifferences while they formed-out well balanced principles and far-reaching conciliations about man's basic fears of government and their equal need for a strong central government, and for its power given by the collective local governments chosen OF THE PEOPLE to serve — We the People.

These men oftentimes could disagree over the implications in specific provisions within the document's construction, but they were restrained by personal, disciplined outlines and self-imposed boundaries that gave them entry to an apparatus for compromise which lead to the prize of receiving the greatest liberty ever collected and given for its citizenry to pursue.

Their energetic spirit was a spirit of equality and gave way to very clear methods and practices that could reconcile most all of their personal disagreements as they set and established a new central STANDARD for the ages.

Our founding fathers went way outside of their commission for even assembling in Philadelphia, as their mandate was to find possible ways of bolstering up the Articles of Confederation for its continued success. The conduct of the assembly could have been considered an act of treason against the Articles of Confederation, mutiny against the Congress of the Confederation, and insults against their own countrymen who had sacrificed so much in the last war to win their independence! The framers actually invoked another act founded in the Declaration of Independence by putting off an unworkable, unprofitable, unfixable Constitution, and an inapt government, and started over from scratch — again.

What they actually did may have ignited another rebellion from within its borders that could have set in motion a worse fate than their present situation presented. Still the new Constitution became the law of the land, a collective conscience that established principles unto itself and unto its united people. The almost supernatural Constitution began setting boundaries for discussion, gave parameters for equality, gave guidelines for refined debates, and ultimately became a remedy for comforting so much worry and fear – imaginary and real – present and future.

Declarations and Constitutions have come and gone through time. In fact, the American Constitution is continuously the longest lasting Constitution in the entire world today; it has endured twice as long as any other current Constitution.

Once a book dealer went into a book collector's shop and asked if they carried any copies of the French Constitution, and the desk clerk replied, "Sorry, we do not deal in periodical literature." This could be said for most of the Constitutions written from all around the world that have come and fell by the wayside, only to be replaced by ever newer versions, some lasting only hours, days, weeks, months, or a few years.

Yes, many countries have remained the same country for much longer than the United States, but our Constitution has stood through the storms of time and has outlasted all the others.

The document they formed with its Bill of Rights showcased not only the concerns of an age now bygone, it still reveals the personification in the character and wisdom of modern man to govern himself with a secure standard, and reaches forward with security, hope, and direction for America's continued future.

I liken the Constitution to Lady Liberty. Adorn and protect her like she was your mother, her arms are held out to you and yours, as well as to me and mine, but do we now recoil from her embrace? The question is, can we

hold her and protect her as she has done for us or are the lecturing attitudes of all too many elites correct that she is going, going, and soon to be gone to the ages superimposed and laid to rest in the ruins of societies' past Constitutions, to be placed upon script-heaps of funeral pyres? She is the last hope of this world; she is what protects us from the peripheries of hopelessness as no one and no government or peoples in this world are able to save us, nor are they willing to accept us as we are, stewards and light-bearers of liberty united under our Constitution that was labored and delivered and born for the birth of freedom, endowing us with unalienable rights that favor the pursuit of our own secured happiness.

Even with all of our individual goals, hopes, and dreams, and vastly different lifestyles, we all can have a common objective and standard rooted firmly in the Constitution to protect each other's personal rights. This was the intent of the founding fathers because each side (religious and nonreligious) counterbalances the other which makes for somewhat of an "I've got your back and you've got mine" concept. I can freely study and live with biblical principles without fear of my government storming into my house with gag orders or an arrest warrant, and you can do and be whatever you desire without any such pressures. How amazingly wonderful this is for us — We the People!

The Constitution protects the believers in sundry religions throughout this country. The religious can enjoy their individual relationship with God without external pressures from the government, and if this is not living in the sweet spot of life, well then there never was one.

The Constitution protects the secularist in sundry activity throughout this country. The secular can take pleasure from their individual associations without external pressures from the government, and if this is not living in the sweet spot of life, well then there never was one.

Until Christ returns, we believers are in a relatively safe place, better than any time in the history of the world since Paradise; and until Christ returns

the unbeliever is in a relatively safe place, better than any time in the history of the world since man's fall from grace, thanks to our Constitution!

Together we are sharing this land and OUR jointly owned Constitution, we have our hope and they theirs, but together we enjoy the greatest country on the face of the whole earth. Both have vested interest in protecting each other's rights. If we chip away at an opposing side to lessen their stance on the Constitution, we actually destroy something equally as great on our side in other opposite ways. This is the structured perfection and flawless balance within the document itself; this is our every reason to uphold it all as incomparable. The Constitution is our legally signed contract that the founders gave to us not only to enjoy but to protect with all reverence. . ."

The Constitution

"The Constitution of the United States is like the mechanism behind a grand timepiece, setting all the constellations in place, empowering them on their separate courses, and helps set the science of governmental order that generates the country's smooth order of progress. Next to the Scriptures, the Constitution is the greatest document ever written, and for those who do not believe in the Scriptures, they are still left with the Constitution, the greatest document ever written." ~LMJ~