

CONSTITUTION 101

Module 4: Constitutional Convention and Ratification

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LIST OF DELEGATES

- John Dickinson
- Benjamin Franklin
- Elbridge Gerry
- Alexander Hamilton
- James Madison
- Luther Martin
- George Mason
- Gouverneur Morris
- William Paterson
- Charles Pinckney
- Edmund Randolph
- John Rutledge
- Roger Sherman
- George Washington
- James Wilson
- Robert Yates

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John Dickinson (1732–1808)

Delaware

Dickinson was born in Maryland, the son of a prosperous farmer who moved his family to Delaware while Dickinson was still a boy. He was educated by private tutors and then studied law in Philadelphia and London. Brilliant and talented, he moved quickly into politics, serving in both the Delaware and the Pennsylvania colonial assemblies during the 1760s. A conservative, he was often pitted against Benjamin Franklin in political battles between Pennsylvania proprietor interests and the popular faction. When tensions began to develop between England and the colonies, Dickinson defended colonial interests in the pamphlet wars of the 1760s and 1770s. His *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, critical of British policy but urging a peaceful resolution to the conflict, earned him the nickname “Penman of the Revolution.” His support for the colonial cause was undercut by his resentment of the radicalism of New England’s political leadership, and he continued to work for a peaceful solution to the political problems despite

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increasing support among others for independence. In the Continental Congress, Dickinson voted against the Declaration of Independence, but as soon as it passed, he enlisted in the military. He refused to serve in Congress as a representative of Delaware and resigned his seat in the Pennsylvania assembly, retiring from politics for several years. In 1779 he returned to the Continental Congress, where he signed the much-revised version of the Articles of Confederation he had drafted in 1776. He continued to move back and forth between the political worlds of Delaware and Pennsylvania, serving as president of Delaware's Supreme Executive Council in 1781 and president of Pennsylvania the following year. A nationalist, he chaired the Annapolis convention. Throughout the Constitutional Convention, Dickinson was plagued by illness; at fifty-four, he looked far older, an emaciated figure, usually dressed in black. Despite his failing health, Dickinson took an active and influential role in the Philadelphia convention, helping to put the Great Compromise in place. He was forced to leave the convention before its work was ended and was not present to sign the Constitution, which he had played a vital role in creating. After the convention Dickinson devoted his energies to writing about politics rather than participating in them.

Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790)

Pennsylvania

The tenth son of a soap and candlemaker, Franklin, like Alexander Hamilton, stands as an example of the rags-to-riches story. Apprenticed first to his father and later to his half-brother, the printer James Franklin, he demonstrated his literary talents early by publishing anonymous essays in James's newspaper while he was still a teenaged boy. In 1723 Franklin moved to Philadelphia, where, after a two-year hiatus in London, he began a successful career as a printer. His *Poor Richard's Almanac* gained him fame at home and abroad. A man of Renaissance interests, Franklin was an educational reformer, a philanthropist, and a scientist. His political career was long and distinguished, beginning in the 1750s when he served as a member of the colonial legislature and deputy postmaster of the colonies. He lived in England for much of the period from 1757 to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, acting as the colonial agent of his own Pennsylvania and several other colonies. He became well-known during the decade of increasing tensions leading to the Revolution, defending the American position on taxation before the House of Commons. Franklin served in the Continental Congress and was one of the members of the committee that drafted the Declaration of Independence. He was chosen to preside over the Pennsylvania constitutional convention as well. During the war Franklin's diplomatic career in France and at the Paris peace treaty negotiations made him the toast of Paris. Dr. Franklin, as he was known, returned to Pennsylvania in 1785 to serve as president of the Supreme Executive Council of his state. By the time of the Philadelphia convention, Franklin was plagued by ill health, but he attended faithfully, expressed his views on a number of key issues, provided expert advice to the nationalist leadership, and was a firm defender of the proposed Constitution. Despite his age and failing health, in 1787 Franklin

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accepted the position as first president of the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery. He died three years later, still active in civic affairs.

Elbridge Gerry (1744–1814)

Massachusetts

Small, thin, with a hawklike nose and a squint in his eye, this Marblehead native was the third of twelve children of a wealthy merchant-shipper. When Gerry graduated from Harvard College, he joined his father and his brothers in the family export business. Despite a slight stutter, Gerry entered politics in 1772 and, as a protégé of Samuel Adams, became an outspoken advocate of independence. In 1776 Gerry became a member of the Continental Congress, where he focused his attention on military and financial matters. His steady call for better pay and equipment for the Continental troops earned him the name “Soldiers’ Friend.” Although he sat in the Confederation Congress from 1783 to 1785, Gerry found himself less suited to governing than to agitating for revolution. Dour, suspicious, and aggressive, Gerry made many enemies during his political career, but even his foes conceded that he was politically shrewd and clever. At the convention Gerry managed to antagonize almost everyone with his unpredictable stances on key issues. Although he began the convention as an advocate of a strong central government, he ultimately refused to sign the Constitution that it produced and worked against ratification in his home state. In 1789, however, he declared himself a supporter of the new government and was elected to the first Congress. Here he became a strong advocate of Federalist policies. By 1789 Gerry had shifted political loyalties once again. After several failures to win the governorship of his home state, Gerry at last took that office in 1810. When the Democratic-Republicans attempted to hold on to political power in Massachusetts by redistricting measures, Gerry’s Federalist opponents coined the phrase “gerrymandering” to describe this political ploy. Nearly seventy years old, Gerry nevertheless agreed to serve as James Madison’s vice president in 1813, the last political office of his long and stormy career.

Alexander Hamilton (1755–1804)

New York

A genuine American rags-to-riches story, Hamilton’s life began on the tiny island of Nevis, where he was born the illegitimate son of a Scottish merchant and an English-French Huguenot mother, and it ended with the largest funeral honoring a distinguished New Yorker ever held in that state. Brilliant, ambitious, and fortunate in his ability to find powerful mentors, Hamilton came to America just as the Revolutionary crisis was beginning. He quickly emerged as a leader of the independence movement in New York, and when war broke out, his skill as an artillery captain caught the attention of General George Washington, who invited the young officer to join his “family” as an aide-de-camp. Marriage to the daughter of one of New York’s leading landholders, combined with the devotion of Washington, secured Hamilton a place in the top

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echelons of society. But it was his genius and his legal talents as much as his charm and connections that made him welcome. A dedicated nationalist from the start, it was Hamilton who orchestrated the groundswell for a Constitutional Convention. Hampered by his state's antinationalist delegation, he took a backseat to Madison and Morris at the convention but was critical in securing New York's ratification afterward. He was an author, with James Madison and John Jay, of the influential *Federalist Papers* and was chosen to serve as the nation's first secretary of the treasury. It was his plans for fiscal responsibility—including funding the debt and the creation of the Bank of the United States—that set the country on the path of remarkable economic growth. Hamilton's support for a commercial and industrial economy clashed with Jefferson and Madison's vision of a primarily agrarian society, and as the Jeffersonian party gained power, Hamilton confined his influence to New York. In 1804, at the age of forty-nine, Hamilton was killed in a duel with longtime political enemy, Aaron Burr. At his funeral New York City's financial, political, and educational leaders as well as former Continental army officers joined scores of other mourners honoring a man they considered the driving force behind a strong new nation.

James Madison (1751–1836)

Virginia

The oldest of ten children born to a distinguished planter family, Madison received a good education from tutors and the College of New Jersey. Despite a long and relatively healthy life, Madison was something of a hypochondriac, perhaps due to a sickly and frail childhood. Even before he chose a profession, Madison decided on a life in politics; he threw himself enthusiastically into the independence movement, serving on the local Committee of Safety and in the Virginia convention, where he demonstrated his abilities for constitution writing by framing his state constitution. During the war he served in the assembly and in the Council of State, kept from military service by poor health. In 1780 Madison became the youngest delegate to the Continental Congress. An early advocate of a strong central government, Madison attended both the Mount Vernon conference and the Annapolis convention before earning the title “Architect of the Constitution” for his work at the Philadelphia convention. He campaigned tirelessly for ratification in Virginia and reached out to influence New York as well by his contributions to the essays known as *The Federalist Papers*. Madison won a seat in the first House of Representatives, where he served until 1797. By this time he was a committed leader of the Democratic-Republicans, and he became secretary of state in 1801 when his friend and cofounder of that party, Thomas Jefferson, became president. Madison succeeded Jefferson in 1809, and it was during his administration that the long-standing tensions between Britain and the United States finally erupted into war. After his second term as president, Madison retired to his plantation, Montpelier, where he edited the journal he kept during the Constitutional Convention. He wrote newspaper articles supporting fellow Democratic-Republican and Virginian President James Monroe and acted as Monroe's informal adviser on foreign policy. In

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his last years, Madison became actively involved in the American Colonization Society, an organization that encouraged the emancipation of slaves and their resettlement in Africa.

Luther Martin (1748–1826)

Maryland

One of the most controversial figures at the Philadelphia convention, Martin was a complex and tragic figure. He graduated with honors from the College of New Jersey, taught school in Maryland for a few years, and then studied law in Virginia before making his home in Maryland. He was an early advocate of independence and served on several patriotic committees before the war began. He was highly successful as a lawyer and was named attorney general of Maryland before he was thirty. He was known for his generosity to poorer clients, but also for his rudeness toward men of his own social class. He became increasingly eccentric, however, sometimes appearing disheveled and often appearing drunk in public. At the Philadelphia convention, Martin was an immediate and consistent opponent of the Constitution, voting against the Virginia Plan and questioning the decision that the convention's meetings be held in secret. When he took the floor to speak, he often engaged in loud and long harangues, delivering a three-hour speech at a crucial moment in the debates over representation. He eventually walked out of the convention before it adjourned, joined by fellow delegate John Francis Mercer. During the ratification struggle, Martin campaigned vigorously against the adoption of the Constitution, opposing the increased power of the central government over the states, proportional representation in the House, the inclusion of slaves in determining state populations, and the absence of a jury in Supreme Court deliberations. His criticisms reflected the fundamental Anti-Federalist position. Yet by 1791 Martin had joined the Federalist camp, driven there by his hatred of Thomas Jefferson. Throughout the rest of his career, Martin did not flinch from taking on controversial legal cases. He successfully defended his friend Supreme Court Justice Samuel Chase when Chase was impeached, and he served as a defense lawyer for Aaron Burr when Burr was on trial for treason in 1807. A brilliant lawyer, Martin argued Maryland's position in the landmark Supreme Court case *McCulloch v. Maryland*. In his last years, however, heavy drinking and illness diminished Martin's fortune and his reputation. He suffered a paralysis in 1819 that forced him to retire as Maryland's attorney general, and he died a poor man in 1826.

George Mason (1725–1792)

Virginia

Perhaps the most effective opponent of Madison and the Federalists, Mason was raised by his uncle, John Mercer, following his father's death when Mason was a young boy. Mercer boasted one of the largest private libraries in the colonies, and Mason read widely in these fifteen hundred volumes. As the owner of Gunston Hall, one of Virginia's largest plantations, Mason

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was a wealthy and socially influential man. He became involved in western land speculation, buying an interest in the Ohio Company, and wrote a stinging defense of colonial entitlement to the Ohio Valley region when the Crown revoked the company's rights. Mason served as a justice of the peace before taking a seat in 1759 in the House of Burgesses. He took up his pen once again to defend the colonial position on the Stamp Act, and by 1774 he had emerged as a leader of the patriot movement in Virginia. Mason drafted the Virginia Declaration of Rights in 1776. By the early 1780s, Mason had grown disillusioned with public life and retired to Gunston Hall. He agreed to attend the Mount Vernon conference in 1785 but did not go to Annapolis despite his appointment as a delegate to that convention. Mason played a leading role at the Philadelphia convention, speaking frequently and exerting considerable influence over the deliberations. He became increasingly critical of the direction the convention was moving, however, and in the end, Mason refused to sign the Constitution. Among his primary objections was the absence of a bill of rights. Mason actively campaigned against ratification in Virginia, causing a breach in his friendships with both Washington and Madison.

Gouverneur Morris (1752–1816)

Pennsylvania

Born to wealth and privilege on his family's impressive Morrisania estate in New York, Morris was educated first by private tutors and then by the faculty of King's College (later Columbia University). As a young man, Morris lost his leg in a freak carriage accident, but this did not appear to diminish his very active engagement with women. He trained as a lawyer but entered politics as the movement for independence gained ground. A social conservative, he nevertheless joined the patriots' camp and served in New York's Revolutionary provincial congress. Despite his wooden leg, Morris served in the militia as well. Acknowledged as a brilliant stylist, he was appointed to the committee that drafted New York's first constitution. In the late 1770s, Morris served in the Continental Congress, where he was one of the youngest and most intellectually impressive of the delegates. When Governor George Clinton's party defeated him in his bid for reelection to Congress, Morris moved to Philadelphia and opened a legal practice. By 1781 he was once again involved in public service, working as an assistant to the superintendent of finance for the United States during the Revolution. Gouverneur Morris was one of the leading figures at the Philadelphia convention, speaking more often than any other delegate, his analytical powers leavened by his keen satiric sense. His nationalism was strengthened by his experiences working with Robert Morris and his conviction that a strong central government and a sound fiscal policy were essential to the survival of the country. It was Morris who produced the final draft of the Constitution. After the convention he returned to private life, took possession of the family estate at Morrisania, and settled once again in New York. A man of broad-ranging intellectual and cultural interests, Morris spent many of the years after the Philadelphia convention abroad. He was in France as that nation's revolution began, and in 1792 President Washington asked him to take over the duties of minister to that nation

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from Thomas Jefferson. An ardent Federalist until his death, Morris once again retired from politics when the Jeffersonian party began to dominate the national political scene. In his last years, he became a vocal critic of the Democratic-Republicans and of the War of 1812.

William Paterson (1745–1806)

New Jersey

Paterson was born in Ireland, but his family immigrated to America when he was only two years old, settling first in Connecticut and later in Trenton, New Jersey. The family prospered and Paterson was able to attend the College of New Jersey. After receiving his master's degree, he took up the practice of law. During the war he served in the provincial congress, the state constitutional convention, and New Jersey's legislative council. From 1776 to 1783, he was the state attorney general. After the death of his wife in 1783, Paterson retired from politics and devoted his energies to his legal practice. His selection as a delegate to the Philadelphia convention revived his political career. The five feet two inch Paterson—fastidious in his dress, mild-mannered, and modest in his demeanor—played a central role in the Constitutional Convention as the author of the New Jersey Plan. Although he left the convention after the issue of representation in the Senate was resolved, he returned to sign the Constitution. Paterson was a member of the first U.S. Senate and later governor of his state. From 1793 to 1806, he served as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Charles Pinckney (1757–1824)

South Carolina

The cousin of fellow South Carolinian Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, Pinckney was the son of a wealthy lawyer and planter. Unlike many wealthy young men, Pinckney did not attend college but received all his education and his legal training in his home city of Charleston. Late in the war, Pinckney enlisted in the militia. He rose to the rank of lieutenant and served during the siege of Savannah. When Charleston fell, the young officer was captured and remained a British prisoner until the summer of 1781. Meanwhile, Pinckney had begun a political career, serving in the Continental Congress from 1777 to 1778 and later in the Confederation Congress. He also served several terms in his state legislature. A nationalist, he wanted the government to be strong enough to insure American rights to navigate the Mississippi. At the Philadelphia convention, Pinckney commanded notice. He was ambitious, bold, an excellent speaker, and a key member of the nationalist caucus, although his inflated claims that he had submitted a draft of a plan for the government that was the real basis for the Constitution are unfounded. After the convention he rose rapidly on the South Carolina political scene. He became governor in 1789, an office he held until 1792, and in 1790 he chaired the state constitutional convention. At first a Federalist, Pinckney slowly began to shift his allegiances. He opposed the Jay Treaty and began to align himself with the backcountry farmers who were the heart of the

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Democratic-Republican Party in his state. In 1796 Pinckney was again in the governor's seat, and in 1798 he went to the U.S. Senate with the backing of the Democratic-Republicans. In 1800 he served as Jefferson's campaign manager in South Carolina. As a reward, President Jefferson appointed Pinckney minister to Spain. When he returned from Europe, he took over the reins of the Democratic-Republican Party in his home state. He served a third term as governor from 1806 to 1808. In 1819 he reentered national politics as a member of Congress, but poor health forced him to retire from political life in 1821.

Edmund Randolph (1753–1813)

Virginia

Born into a prosperous planter family, Randolph received his education at the College of William and Mary and then went on to study law with his father. When the Revolution began, Randolph's father chose to remain loyal to the Crown; the younger Randolph supported independence. He served as one of General Washington's aides-de-camp during the war. At twenty-three, Randolph was the youngest member of the state convention that adopted Virginia's first constitution in 1776. Soon afterward he became mayor of Williamsburg and then the state's attorney general. He entered national politics with his election to the Continental Congress in 1779. In 1786 Randolph became governor of Virginia. It was Randolph who presented the Virginia Plan to the Philadelphia convention, but as the weeks went by, his support for a strong central government diminished. He reluctantly declared his unwillingness to sign the Constitution at the convention, but when the ratification battle began in Virginia, Randolph once again returned to the Federalist camp. He served as President Washington's first attorney general, and when Jefferson resigned from his cabinet post as secretary of state in 1794, Randolph stepped into that position. He attempted to remain neutral in the growing political division between Jefferson and Hamilton, and perhaps because of the strain this caused, he decided to retire from public life in 1795. He returned to the practice of law and devoted his free time to writing a history of Virginia.

John Rutledge (1739–1800)

South Carolina

Born into a large family of Irish immigrants, Rutledge received his early education from his physician father. He was sent to London's prestigious Middle Temple for his legal training and was admitted to English practice in 1760. He returned soon afterward to his native Charleston, married, and began a successful legal career. He made his fortune, however, from his plantations and slaves. By 1761 Rutledge had won a seat in the provincial assembly and remained in this legislative body until independence was declared. There he earned a reputation as one of the greatest orators of his day. As tensions increased between the colonies and Great Britain, Rutledge defended American rights but worked for a peaceful resolution of differences.

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In 1774 he was a delegate to the Continental Congress, and there, too, he pursued a moderate course. Once independence was declared, however, he played an active role in helping to reorganize his state government and in writing South Carolina's state constitution. Although a patriot, Rutledge was a political conservative, resigning his position in the state legislature when democratic revisions of the state constitution were passed. His views did not prevent his election to the governorship in 1779. When Charleston was taken by the British in 1780, Rutledge suffered severe financial losses. His extensive property holdings were confiscated, and Rutledge was forced to flee to North Carolina. He never recovered his fortune. Rutledge served in the Continental Congress from 1782 to 1783 and then returned to state offices. At the Philadelphia convention, he was a moderate nationalist, speaking frequently on issues and serving on several important committees. His deepest concern at the convention was the protection of southern interests. President Washington appointed Rutledge as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, but he left that bench in 1791 to become chief justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Washington again called upon him to serve on the U.S. Court in 1795, this time to replace John Jay as chief justice. His appointment was not confirmed by the Federalist-dominated Senate, however, due in part to his vocal opposition to the Jay Treaty of 1794 and in part to signs of mental illness brought on by the death of his wife. The rejection led Rutledge to retire from public life.

Roger Sherman (1721–1793) **Connecticut**

Tall and awkward, Sherman provided a striking contrast to the suave Dr. Johnson at the Connecticut delegates' table. The ungainly Sherman was an autodidact who devoured books in what spare time he could eke out while doing farm chores and learning the cobbler's trade from his father. Although he was born in Massachusetts, he moved to Connecticut as a young man following his father's death. There he purchased a store, learned surveying, and won appointment to a number of local offices. With no formal education, Sherman managed nevertheless to pass the bar in 1754 and establish a reputation as a distinguished jurist and political leader. His skills in political debate and his shrewdness in political negotiations were well-known by the time he came to the Philadelphia convention. Despite his constant political duties before the Revolution, Sherman was able to publish an essay on monetary theory and a series of almanacs containing his own astronomical observations and his own poetry. In 1761 Sherman gave up his legal practice and returned to shopkeeping. He did not give up politics, however. He served in the Continental Congress and was on the committees that drafted both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation. Although his finances were failing, Sherman agreed to take time away from his business interests to serve at the Philadelphia convention. He was one of the prime spokesmen for the interests of the smaller states and played a critical role in creating the Connecticut Compromise. A solid supporter of

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the Constitution, Roger Sherman served in the first House of Representatives and later in the Senate. He remained a Federalist throughout his life.

George Washington (1732–1799)

Virginia

Washington was born into the Virginia gentry, the oldest of six children from his father's second marriage. His father's estates included a plantation that would later be known as Mount Vernon. Washington had a limited education, probably from tutors, but he did train as a surveyor. For several years he conducted surveys in Virginia and in what later became West Virginia. In 1753 the royal governor of Virginia appointed him a major in the militia, and by 1754 he had risen to the rank of colonel. When he was demoted because of the expected arrival of British regulars, Washington resigned his commission and leased Mount Vernon from his brother. By 1755, however, he was back in the military as an aide to General Edward Braddock. In 1759 he returned to civilian life, married, and focused much of his energy on farming. He found time, however, for political activity. Between 1759 and 1774, he sat in the House of Burgesses, where he was a strong supporter of colonial resistance to the new British policies. Washington served in the First and Second Continental Congresses, and in 1775 he accepted command of the Continental army. His military experience intensified his conviction that the nation needed a strong central government, and Washington was active in helping to orchestrate the call for the Philadelphia convention. He served as host to one of its predecessors, the Mount Vernon conference. After some hesitation, he agreed to join the Virginia delegation to the Philadelphia convention, where he was immediately elected presiding officer. In 1789 Washington became the first president of the United States by unanimous election. During two administrations Washington supported programs and policies consistent with his Federalist views, more often accepting Hamilton's position than Jefferson's on both foreign and domestic matters. Although many encouraged him to serve a third term as president, Washington declined. Rheumatism and other ailments prompted him to retire to his beloved Mount Vernon, where he died at the age of sixty-seven. Although he had not made the abolition of slavery one of his central causes, he did emancipate all his slaves when he died.

James Wilson (1742–1798)

Pennsylvania

Scottish by birth, Wilson received an excellent education at the universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. He immigrated to America just as the Stamp Act protests were beginning in 1765. His first position was as a Latin tutor at the College of Philadelphia, but he soon gave up teaching for a career in law. He earned a reputation as one of the ablest lawyers in the country and became a leading advocate of American independence. He was a man who elicited respect rather than affection, appearing stern and forbidding to most who met him.

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Having set up a law practice in western Pennsylvania, Wilson became a political leader in his county. He served in the first provincial assembly, distinguishing himself by writing a tract on the issue of parliamentary authority in the colonies. By 1774 he was in the Continental Congress, and he signed the Declaration of Independence. In most regards, Wilson was a conservative and he opposed the liberal constitution first adopted by Pennsylvania. Popular opposition to his views only hardened them, and his ties with the state's leading aristocratic and conservative political figures increased. With Robert Morris, Wilson served as one of the directors of the Bank of North America. Wilson was an indisputable leader of the nationalist forces at the Philadelphia convention, second only to Madison in his role in crafting the new government. He led the battle for ratification in Pennsylvania and was the architect of the new, more conservative constitution drafted for Pennsylvania in 1789–90. He was disappointed when President Washington did not appoint him chief justice of the Supreme Court but accepted a position on that bench as an associate justice. A student of the law as well as a practitioner, Wilson welcomed an appointment in 1789 as the first law professor at the College of Philadelphia, and he soon began to compile an official digest of the laws of Pennsylvania. Despite his recognized brilliance and his erudition, Wilson did not distinguish himself on the Supreme Court, perhaps because he mixed business interests with his duties. He barely escaped impeachment when he tried to influence legislation in his home state that would favor land speculators like himself. Wilson suffered from the same compulsive speculative behavior as his friend Bob Morris, and, like Morris, he wound up fleeing creditors. Fearing imprisonment, he moved to New Jersey. Suffering from extreme anxiety over his circumstances, Wilson collapsed at the home of a friend in North Carolina and died there in 1798.

Robert Yates (1738–1801)

New York

A native of Schenectady, New York, Yates was a well-educated lawyer considered by many to be a vain and pompous man. After admission to the bar, Yates moved to Albany, where he became immediately involved in local politics. A strong supporter of independence, he served on the Albany Committee of Safety and in the provincial congress. He played a key role in drafting the first constitution for New York State. By 1777 Yates was a member of the New York Supreme Court and presided over the court as chief justice throughout the 1790s. A determined opponent of the Constitution, Yates left the Philadelphia convention in protest. With his fellow delegate John Lansing Jr. he wrote a joint letter to Governor Clinton that detailed the dangers of a centralized government and the illegitimacy of the Constitutional Convention. He worked vigorously against ratification when the state convention met, writing a series of letters, signed “Brutus” and “Sydney,” that criticized the Constitution. Like Madison and Hamilton, Yates took personal notes at the convention, and in 1821 these were published as the *Secret Proceedings and Debates of the Convention Assembled...for the Purpose of Forming the Constitution of the United States*.