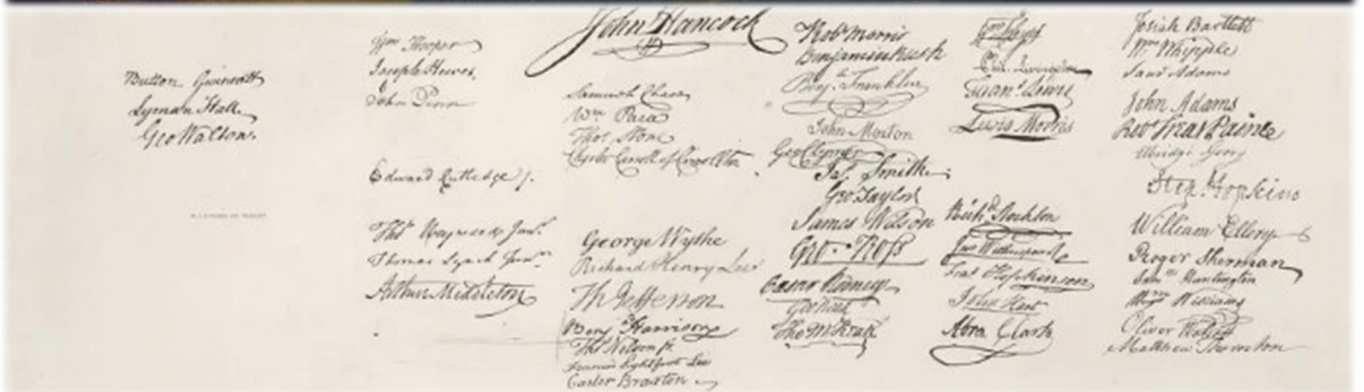




Stephen Holston Chapter
Tennessee Society
Sons of the American Revolution

July 4th, 1776: The Declaration Lives On The Signers



James White's Fort
205 East Hill Avenue
Knoxville, Tennessee 37915

Signers of the Declaration of Independence

<u>Name</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Age at Signing</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Age at Death</u>
Adams, John	MA	40	Lawyer	90
Adams, Samuel	MA	53	Merchant	81
Bartlett, Josiah	NH	46	Physician	65
Braxton, Carter	VA	39	Plantation	61
Carroll, Charles	MD	38	Merchant, Plantation	95
Chase, Samuel	MD	35	Lawyer	70
Clark, Abraham	NJ	50	Lawyer, Surveyer	68
Clymer, George	PA	37	Merchant	73
Ellery, William	RI	48	Lawyer, Merchant	92
Floyd, William	NJ	41	Land Speculator	86
Franklin, Benjamin	PA	70	Scientist, Printer	84
Gerry, Elbridge	MA	32	Merchant	70
Gwinnett, Button	GA	41	Merchant, Plantation	42
Hall, Lyman	GA	52	Physician, Minister	66
Hancock, John	MA	40	Merchant	56
Harrison, Benjamin	VA	50	Plantation, Farmer	65
Hart, John	NJ	65	Land owner	68
Hewes, Joseph	NC	46	Merchant	49
Heyward Jr., Thomas	SC	30	Lawyer, Plantation	62
Hooper, William	NC	34	Lawyer	48
Hopkins, Stephen	RI	69	Merchant	78
Hopkinson, Francis	NJ	38	Lawyer, Musician	53
Huntington, Samuel	CT	45	Lawyer	64
Jefferson, Thomas	VA	33	Lawyer, Plantation, Scientist	83
Lee, Francis Lightfoot	VA	41	Plantation	62
Lee, Richard Henry	VA	44	Plantation, Merchant	62
Lewis, Francis	NY	63	Merchant	89
Livingston, Philip	NY	60	Merchant	62

Signers of the Declaration of Independence

<u>Name</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Age at Signing</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Age at Death</u>
Lynch Jr., Thomas	SC	26	Lawyer	30
McKean, Thomas	DE	42	Lawyer	83
Middleton, Arthur	SC	34	Plantation	44
Morris, Lewis	NY	50	Plantation	71
Morris, Robert	PA	42	Merchant	72
Morton, John	PA	52	Farmer	53
Nelson Jr., Thomas	VA	37	Merchant, Plantation	50
Paca, William	MD	35	Lawyer, Plantation	58
Paine, Robert Treat	MA	45	Lawyer, Scientist	83
Penn, John	NC	36	Lawyer	48
Read, George	DE	42	Lawyer	65
Rodney, Caesar.	DE	47	Plantation, Military	55
Ross, George	PA	46	Lawyer	49
Rush, Benjamin Dr.	PA	30	Physician	67
Rutledge, Edward	SC	26	Lawyer, Plantation	50
Sherman, Roger	CT	55	Lawyer	72
Smith, James	PA	57	Lawyer	87
Stockton, Richard	NJ	45	Lawyer	50
Stone, Thomas	MD	33	Lawyer	44
Taylor, George	PA	60	Merchant	65
Thornton, Matthew	NH	62	Physician	89
Walton, George	GA	35	Lawyer	63
Whipple, William	NH	46	Merchant	55
Williams, William	CT	45	Merchant	80
Wilson, James	PA	33	Lawyer	55
Witherspoon, John	NJ	53	Minister	71
Wolcott, Oliver	CT	49	Lawyer	71
Wythe, George	VA	50	Lawyer	80

The Signers of the Declaration of Independence and the Dangers They Faced

By J. Mark DeNicola

On July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress officially approved the Declaration of Independence, a bold proclamation that severed political ties with Great Britain. And on August 2nd, the Signers started affixing their signatures to the Declaration. These Signers were not merely making a symbolic gesture; they were committing an act of treason against the British Crown. Their signatures marked them as rebels, and the consequences they faced were severe, ranging from loss of property and social standing to imprisonment and death.

The Signers came from diverse backgrounds – lawyers, merchants, farmers, and physicians – but they were united by a shared belief in liberty and self-governance. Each Signer risked everything for the cause of independence.

The dangers they faced were not hypothetical. By signing the Declaration, they became enemies of the British government. If captured, they could be hanged for treason. Many suffered direct consequences. For example, Thomas Nelson Jr., a wealthy Virginian, ordered American troops to fire on his own home when it was occupied by British forces. Francis Lewis of New York had his home destroyed and his wife imprisoned by the British. Richard Stockton of New Jersey was captured, imprisoned, and subjected to harsh treatment that ruined his health.

Economic ruin was another common consequence. The British often targeted the properties of Signers, burning homes, seizing estates, and destroying livelihoods. Carter Braxton, a wealthy Virginian, lost his ships and fortune to the war effort, and others, like William Floyd and Lewis Morris, saw their homes and lands ravaged by British troops.

Social and political backlash also followed. Some Signers were ostracized by loyalist neighbors or faced internal divisions within their communities. Many were not celebrated in their lifetimes, and several died in poverty or obscurity, their contributions, like those of many American Patriots, only recognized posthumously.

Yet, despite these dangers, none of the Signers recanted. Their commitment to the cause of American independence was unwavering. They believed that liberty was worth the risk, and their courage laid the foundation for the United States. The closing line of the Declaration – "we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor" – was not mere rhetoric. It was a solemn vow, and many paid dearly to uphold it.

In retrospect, the bravery of the Signers is even more striking. In today's terms, they were Don Quixote, tilting at windmills! The impossible dream! They had limited resources and no guarantee of victory. Their decision to sign the Declaration was a pivotal moment in history, one that inspired future generations to cherish freedom and resist tyranny.

Today, the Signers are remembered not just for their role in founding a nation, but for the personal sacrifices they made in pursuit of a greater ideal. Their legacy is a testament to the power of conviction and the value of courage in the face of overwhelming odds.