

“The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America”

[Emphasis on George Walton, one of the three signers for Georgia]

Fifty-six delegates to the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia signed the United States Declaration of Independence. This was a bold statement announcing that the thirteen American colonies then at war with Great Britain were now truly independent states, and thus no longer would be a part of the British Empire. Although the wording of the Declaration was approved by Congress on July 4, the actual date of its signing has been disputed by historians. Most historians have concluded that it was signed nearly a month after its adoption, on August 2, 1776, and not on July 4 as is commonly believed.

The first and most famous signature on this document is that of John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress. When looking at the signers of the Declaration of Independence it's easy to notice that John Hancock's signature is more prominent than any of the other signers.

Among those that signed were two of our future presidents, Thomas Jefferson [from Virginia] and John Adams [from Massachusetts].

Edward Rutledge of South Carolina was the youngest signer at age 26, and Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania was the oldest signer at age 70. Pennsylvania also had the largest number of signers.

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President of Congress

1. John Hancock
(Massachusetts)

New Hampshire

2. Josiah Bartlett
3. William Whipple
4. Matthew Thornton

Massachusetts

5. Samuel Adams
6. John Adams
7. Robert Treat Paine
8. Elbridge Gerry

Rhode Island

9. Stephen Hopkins
10. William Ellery

Connecticut

11. Roger Sherman
12. Samuel Huntington
13. William Williams
14. Oliver Wolcott

New York

15. William Floyd
16. Philip Livingston
17. Francis Lewis
18. Lewis Morris

New Jersey

19. Richard Stockton
20. John Witherspoon
21. Francis Hopkinson
22. John Hart
23. Abraham Clark

Pennsylvania

24. Robert Morris
25. Benjamin Rush
26. Benjamin Franklin
27. John Morton
28. George Clymer
29. James Smith
30. George Taylor
31. James Wilson
32. George Ross

Delaware

33. George Read
34. Caesar Rodney
35. Thomas McKean

Maryland

36. Samuel Chase
37. William Paca
38. Thomas Stone
39. Charles Carroll of Carrollton

Virginia

40. George Wythe
41. Richard Henry Lee
42. Thomas Jefferson
43. Benjamin Harrison
44. Thomas Nelson, Jr.
45. Francis Lightfoot Lee
46. Carter Braxton

North Carolina

47. William Hooper
48. Joseph Hewes
49. John Penn

South Carolina

50. Edward Rutledge
51. Thomas Heyward, Jr.
52. Thomas Lynch, Jr.
53. Arthur Middleton

Georgia

54. Button Gwinnett
55. Lyman Hall
56. George Walton

The offices he held were:

- Continental Congress (1776–78)
- Colonel of the First Georgia Militia (1778)
- Governor of Georgia (1779–80)
- U.S. Congress (1780–1781)
- Chief Justice of Georgia (1783–89)
- Governor of Georgia (1789–90)
- U.S. Senator (1795–96)

George Walton, one of the three signers of the Declaration of Independence from Georgia, was born in Virginia in 1749. His parents Robert and Mary Sarah Hughes Walton died when he was an infant, resulting in his adoption by an uncle [**George Walton and his wife Martha Hughes Walton, 5th great-grandparents of my wife**] with whom he entered apprenticeship as a carpenter. [It could get a little confusing because brothers married sisters.] In 1769 once his apprenticeship ended he moved to Savannah, Georgia to study law under a Mr. Young and was admitted to the bar in 1774. His oldest brother was John Walton whose name appears as one of the Signers of the famous "Article of Confederation and Perpetual Union" of the Thirteen States, drawn up on July 9, 1778.

George Walton was elected in 1776 to the Continental Congress, a position he held until the end of 1778. He also was a Colonel of the First Regiment of the Georgia Militia in 1778 and when he was riding his horse during the Battle of Savannah a cannonball was fired and it hit him in the right thigh. With a broken leg Walton was taken prisoner by the British army for two years. **Remember this battle wound ... it will prove his identity later.** He was freed through a prisoner exchange in 1779. It was soon after this, in October 1779, that George Walton was elected Governor of Georgia, a position he held for only two months, because in January 1780, he was appointed to the United States Senate to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of James Jackson. Other political offices he held were (1) Chief Justice of Georgia, 1783–1789, (2) Governor of Georgia again in 1789-1790 and (3) U.S. Senator in 1795-1796.

George Walton married Dorothy Augusta Camber in 1778. She outlived him by many years. She is buried in St. Michael's Churchyard in Pensacola, Escambia County, Florida. Her tomb bearing the following inscription: "Died in Pensacola, September 12, 1832, Mrs. Dorothy Walton, a native of the State of Ga., a Matron of the Revolution, Consort and Relict of George Walton, a signer of the Declaration of American Independence". They had two children (1) Thomas Camber Walton, an attorney, died unmarried in 1803 and (2) George Walton, Jr., like his father, was very involved in the political arena. In 1821 he was appointed Secretary of the Territory of Florida under the governorship of Andrew Jackson, and succeeded him as Governor of that Territory. He founded Tallahassee, the Capitol City of Florida. In about 1837 he moved to Mobile, Alabama and served in 1838 as Mayor of Mobile.

The only son of George Walton, Jr. was Robert Watkins Walton. He became a Major in a Mobile Regiment of Volunteers serving in the Creek Indian War and was Mayor of Mobile at the time of his death in March 1849 (at the age of 30). He died unmarried; thus, ending the line of the male descendants of George Walton, the signer of the Declaration of Independence.

George Walton, Jr. and his wife Sarah M. Walker, also had one daughter, Octavia. She married Henry S. LeVert. Madame LeVert, as she was called, was a famous belle in her youth and a distinguished woman of the world before and after her marriage. She traveled much, spoke several languages fluently, and was a brilliant

conversationalist. She was presented at the court of Queen Victoria of England at a time when such a presentation was a rare distinction for an American woman.

George Walton, the Signer of the Declaration of Independence, died in Augusta, Georgia on February 2, 1804, at his home, *College Hill*, near Augusta. He was initially buried at Rosney Plantation, the home of his nephew Robert Walton [my wife's 4th great-grandfather and a Captain in the Revolutionary War]; however, George Walton was reinterred in 1848 beneath the Signers Monument in front of the courthouse on Greene Street in Augusta.

It was the intention of the public-spirited citizens who built the Signers Monument to bury beneath the foundation stones of the monument the remains of the three Founding Fathers of Georgia. In addition to George Walton the other two signers from Georgia were Lyman Hall and Button Gwinnett. A committee was appointed to open the graves and superintend the removal and the reburial of the bones of these men. In the case of (1) Lyman Hall, this was not difficult. His tomb on his plantation in Burke County was well marked and his remains easily identified. (2) The committee had trouble locating the grave of George Walton. Although the place of his grave was remembered by some of the older locals, no stone marked the precise spot in the family burying ground at Rosney Plantation, some nine miles from Augusta. A careful search was successful. The right thigh-bone still gave evidence of when Colonel Walton was shot in December 1778 during the assault upon the capture of Savannah.

(3) It proved impossible to find the bones of Button Gwinnett. He had died in Savannah in 1777 of a wound inflicted during a duel with pistols at the short distance of four paces. It was generally believed that Gwinnett had been buried in the old cemetery on South Broad Street in Savannah, but no gravestone could be found, and there was no one left alive to point out his unmarked grave.

The remains of Lyman Hall and George Walton were removed from their respective graves and reburied in the earth beneath the monument.

Only 15 of the 56 signers have male descendants today as reported by The Society of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence that was formed in 1907. George Walton has NO male descendants today.

The Farm Home of George Walton, Meadow Garden, is one of Georgia's oldest dwellings. The National Historic Landmark is a quiet and inviting oasis in the midst of the industrialized city of Augusta, Georgia. The home features 18th and 19th Century American and English furnishings, porcelains, paintings and primitive household equipment. Meadow Garden is owned and operated by The Georgia State Society Daughters of the American Revolution.

In closing ... The “New One World Trade Center” [also known as The Freedom Tower] in New York replaces the fallen twin-towers. When the spire and beacon were lifted to the top of the new tower it proudly stood 17 [Hundred and] 76 feet tall. We owe the liberties and freedoms we proudly hold as Americans to those 56

signers of the United States Declaration of Independence who stood-up for our rights in 1776.

*Speech given by Bobby Joe Seales during his tenure as 2014-2015 President,
Alabama Society SAR*