

Chapter 2

The Men of Philadelphia

Altogether, fifty-five men, representing twelve of the thirteen states came to Philadelphia to revise the Articles of Confederation. Only Rhode Island refused to send any delegates. Those who ventured to the Convention were a talented group of men, perhaps the most talented ever to assemble for the purpose of writing a constitution. They were well educated and experienced in government; they were men of affairs who had served their country in colonial legislatures, the Continental Congress, and/or the armed service. They included slave owners from the south, merchants from the north, a large company of lawyers, and various men of business. Many of them knew from first-hand experience the frustrations of running a government with no money and no power.

The wealth and social status of the men who came to Philadelphia stood out perhaps as much as their intellect and experience. As lawyers, slave owners, and shippers, they represented an elite group of Americans that differed significantly from the rest of the population which consisted of farmers, indentured servants, mechanics, day laborers and slaves. While few Americans owned government bonds, a full 40 of the 55 delegates had invested or would invest in such securities. Furthermore, fourteen had speculated in western lands, twenty-four had lent money at interest; eleven had invested in manufacturing and shipping; and fifteen owned slaves. None of the delegates were African-Americans, none were women, and only one was a small farmer. Clearly, the 55 delegates who convened in Philadelphia were not typical Americans.

While the Founders' numbers were drawn from the ranks of uniquely qualified individuals, some famous Americans were not at the convention. Those notables not in attendance included: Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, who was serving his country as ambassador to France; fellow Virginian, Patrick Henry, who claimed he "smelled a rat" and decided to skip the proceedings; and Sam Adams, John Hancock, and Thomas Paine, who among the leaders of the Revolution were branded as radicals.

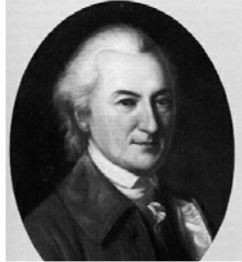
Twenty-three of the most notable delegates in attendance are described below:

David Brearly of New Jersey (1745-1790)

A college dropout who started to practice law at age 22, Brearly became active in the protest against the British and gained considerable fame in New Jersey by denouncing British policies. His words got him arrested by the British for treason, but an angry mob freed him. He later joined the colonial militia, started as a captain, and rose to the rank of colonel. In 1776, he stopped soldiering long enough to help his state write a new constitution. Shortly before his death in 1790, Brearly became a federal judge.

At the Convention, Brearly focused primarily on the issue of representation. Because he represented, a small (sparsely populated) state that could be easily outvoted by larger states if the Convention decided to establish representation based on population, he wanted each state represented equally in the new Congress. Aware of the weaknesses of the government under the Articles of Confederation Brearly wanted to give more power to the national government and devoted himself to accomplishing this goal.

John Dickinson of Delaware (1732-1808)



John Dickinson

Though born to a wealthy family that provided private tutors and an English education for their son, Dickinson began his protests against British policies by denouncing the Stamp Act in 1765. His eloquent speeches and prose denouncing British-imposed taxes made him famous throughout the colonies. Nevertheless, Dickinson voted against independence in 1776 and refused to sign the Declaration. He enlisted in the army, however, and served as a common soldier. During the war, Dickinson moved from Pennsylvania to Delaware, where he helped write its constitution. In 1777, Dickinson again put his political skills to work writing the Articles of Confederation, which did not reflect his desire to give the government much more power than it had. At different times in his unusual career, Dickinson was elected governor of Delaware and then of Pennsylvania. He accumulated a great deal of wealth over his lifetime, particularly through the law practice he established and successful investments he made in real estate in three different states.

A man with rather extreme political views, Dickinson wanted to make the national government much stronger and the states far weaker than they were under the Articles of Confederation. As a representative of a small state like New Jersey, Dickinson supported the rule that all states have one vote in Congress, but he did not want an impotent national government. He feared that the states possessed so much power that they would make the national government completely ineffective. Dickinson's insistence on strong national power derived, perhaps, from his well-known admiration of England and its system of government. He considered the limited monarchy practiced in Great Britain as one of the best governments in the world. A king, Dickinson believed, could do what he thought best for the country without having to depend on the consent of the people, who Dickinson did not trust. He thought, for instance, that they would support laws favoring such 'wicked schemes' as printing unlimited amounts of paper money. Because he believed their interests aligned more with those of the nation, he wanted only men with property to vote. Under Dickinson's aristocratic plan, voters would elect delegates to a Senate modeled after the House of Lords. To keep the president honest, he would give Congress the power to remove him for misconduct or neglect in office.

Finally, Dickinson's less than democratic views did not extend to the institution of slavery, which he considered an evil. He advocated that the national government stop the flow of slaves into the country.

Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut (1745-1807)

Like many of his fellow delegates, Ellsworth enjoyed the privileges of wealth and good education in his childhood and adolescence. He attended Princeton University, graduated in 1766, taught school, served as a minister, and in 1771 started a law practice. By this time, he had become so poor that he had to walk twenty miles each day to and from Hartford because he could not afford a horse. After marrying the daughter of a successful family he moved his home to Hartford, where he gained a reputation as one of Connecticut's best lawyers. In addition, Ellsworth earned a large amount of money by buying and selling real estate and securities at a profit; he once bought government bonds for \$530 which he later cashed in for \$5,985.

During the Revolution, Ellsworth spent six years representing Connecticut in the Continental Congress. After the Convention, he served as U.S. senator, and in 1796 he began serving on the Supreme Court, where he would eventually become chief justice.

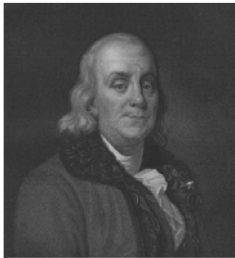
Ellsworth earned a reputation for his habit of talking to himself, his use of snuff, and his absent-mindedness. Once, in fact, he became so lost in thought that he completely neglected a visitor whom he had invited to his house. Despite these unattractive characteristics, Ellsworth was respected for his attentiveness to his responsibilities as a lawyer and government official and was admired for his ability to speak out in debate.

With Roger Sherman, Ellsworth favored the establishment of two branches of Congress: the Senate to represent the states and a House of Representatives to represent the people. He also wanted to divide the power between state and national government. He feared that a strong national government would not be a good government, and he considered the large states in the country the worst governed.

Ellsworth, like Dickinson, did not trust the people of the country to make important decisions. He insisted that the state legislatures – not the people in the states – decide whether to ratify the Constitution. He wanted electors chosen by the people to vote for the president, introducing the idea of a “middle man” who would decide what candidate was best qualified to serve in that office. Furthermore, to ensure longer periods between elections, he wanted the president to serve six-year terms. Although Ellsworth also opposed allowing the people to vote for their senators, he thought it appropriate that they vote directly for their representatives.

Though Ellsworth personally opposed slavery, he did not want to end the slave trade because he thought every state should make such a decision for itself.

Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania (1706-1790)



Ben Franklin

With the exception of George Washington, Benjamin Franklin stood out as the best-known man in America at the time of the Convention and certainly the oldest from the viewpoint of public service. Born in poverty and mostly self-educated, Franklin gained a worldwide reputation as an inventor (bifocals and the Franklin stove), scientist (discovering electricity), sage, diplomat, and politician. He learned printing from his brother and used this skill to publish his hugely successful *Poor Richards' Almanac*. Franklin made a name for himself in 1749 when he presented his Albany Plan of Union, the first noteworthy proposal for colonial unity.

In his later life, Franklin served his colony, his state, and his country, first as an agent from Pennsylvania to the British Parliament then as America's ambassador to England and during the Revolution he became ambassador to France. His diplomacy in England helped postpone the Revolution, while his work at home helped bring the colonies closer to declaring their independence. When he returned from England to Philadelphia after a ten-year absence, Franklin helped write the Declaration of Independence and assisted in composing the Pennsylvania constitution, considered the most democratic in the colonies. As an ambassador to France, he played an integral part in securing the alliance that brought French help to the Americans in the Revolution. Five years later, he helped negotiate the treaty with England that ended the war.

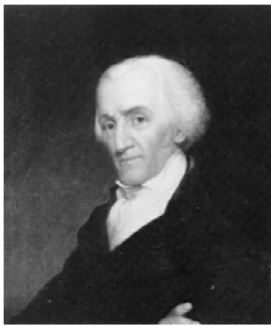
Back in Pennsylvania, Franklin was elected governor, and thereafter served at the Convention that made the dream of unity first proposed in 1749 become a reality. He died in 1790, honored by the entire nation.

At the Convention, Franklin assumed the role of compromiser, using his wit and wisdom to calm angry tempers and to bring people together. He and Roger Sherman of Connecticut presented the

compromise that created the U.S. Congress with a House of Representatives based on population and a Senate that gave each state two votes.

Franklin also favored bringing the spirit of democracy to the Constitution. He, more than most men in Philadelphia, trusted the common people, and spoke of their “public spirit.” He supported giving Congress the power to impeach the president for malpractice and neglect of duty. But Franklin certainly did not want an impotent central government; as a strong nationalist, he tried to make the national government supreme and give it the power to veto laws passed by the states. Many believe today that it was Ben Franklin’s spirit that helped make our nation strong and our government democratic.

Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts (1774-1814)



Elbridge Gerry

Born to wealthy parents, Elbridge Gerry was educated at Harvard but schooled in politics by Samuel Adams. He played an active role in the protests against British policies while serving in the Massachusetts General Assembly. When the British marched to Lexington in 1775, they placed great emphasis on capturing Adams and Gerry. Gerry escaped danger by hiding in a cornfield while dressed in his nightclothes. The next year, Gerry represented Massachusetts in the Continental Congress, where he signed the Declaration of Independence. Later, he returned to serve again in the Massachusetts General Assembly.

Gerry became one of only three delegates to the Constitutional Convention who refused to sign the document he helped write. Upon his return to Massachusetts, he even campaigned against the Constitution. Despite this opposition, however, Gerry later served his country as a representative in the US Congress, as an ambassador to France, and as vice-president under James Madison.

Although he had often spoken favorably about the common people, Shays’ Rebellion convinced Gerry that they were not trustworthy. “The evils we experience,” Gerry told the Constitutional Convention, “stem from too much democracy.” He thought a limited monarchy the best form of government.

Gerry, however, was not entirely comfortable with his anti-democratic ideas. In keeping with democratic principles, he believed in having elections every year to allow the people to control their government. He also favored impeachment as a check on the powers of the president, advocated a bill of rights, and opposed giving the Senate too much power because senators served six-year terms. Moreover, Gerry would do nothing in the Constitution to permit any kind of slavery.

Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts (1738-1796)

Even though he was a fourth-generation American, Gorham was born to a poor family. He attended school in Boston, and began working at age fifteen as an apprentice to a merchant. Six years later, Gorham started a successful business that collapsed when the British captured Charlestown, Massachusetts. Nevertheless, he managed to make another fortune by pirating from British ships and speculating in western lands. Eventually Gorham bought more land than he could pay for and was unable to sell his holdings at a reasonable price, and went bankrupt. Consequently, he spent the last eight years of his life unsuccessfully attempting to pay off a six-million-dollar debt resulting from his failed land speculation.

Although he lacked much of an education, Gorham was known as a man of good sense. He was able to use his agreeable personality to quickly rise from his position as a member of town meeting to member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives where he held the speaker's office for three years. He also became one of the Massachusetts delegates to the Continental Congress, where he briefly served as its president.

Favoring a much stronger national government than Sam Adams, John Hancock, and Elbridge Gerry, his rivals in Massachusetts's politics, Gorham associated with the party that opposed his well-known countrymen. In his eyes, the national government should be strong enough to force its will on every state. Such a government, Gorham believed, could aptly "do justice" throughout the country. At the same time, Gorham supported democracy. He opposed limiting the vote to people with property and favored a four rather than a six-year term for senators. He did not think the nation needed a bill of rights because he thought the representatives of the people in Congress would not take away the rights of the common man. In a spirit of compromise on the issue, Gorham suggested that the importation of slaves continue until 1808.

Alexander Hamilton of New York (1755-1804)

Few Americans have worked as hard for America and accomplished more than did Alexander Hamilton. Born in the West Indies to unmarried parents in 1755, he began working as an accountant at the tender age of thirteen despite his lack of formal education. An essay he composed describing a storm he had witnessed attracted the attention of some wealthy merchants who brought him to New York.



Alexander Hamilton

After spending two years finishing his high school education, Hamilton attended what is now known as Columbia University. There he started a debate society, wrote pamphlets against England, and, at age twenty-one, left school to become commander of an artillery company. Recognizing this young man's talent, George Washington used Hamilton as his personal secretary and aid. But Hamilton tired of serving Washington, for whom he had little respect, and he asked to have his own command. Finally granted his wish, Hamilton distinguished himself in the last battle of the war by storming the British positions at Yorktown. During and immediately after the war, Hamilton found time to earn a degree in law, to serve as a delegate to the Continental Congress, and to woo and wed Elizabeth Schuyler, daughter of one of the most wealthy and prominent New Yorkers.

Hamilton's legal abilities and social connections soon made him one of the best known lawyers in the state. As a member of the Continental Congress he advocated strengthening the national government and successfully devoted his efforts to calling for the Constitutional Convention. Although many delegates found Hamilton's views too extreme, he had a major influence at the Convention. He worked tirelessly to make the national government more powerful, and later he urged people to vote in favor of the Constitution.

After the Convention, Hamilton served under President Washington as the nation's first secretary of the treasury. From this position Hamilton had a great influence over the policies of the government, even in such areas as foreign affairs. He became a leader of the Federalist party, and he continued influencing the actions of many of his followers in Congress as well as those in the president's cabinet long after he retired from government.

In New York during and after government service, Hamilton found himself frequently frustrated by the activities of opposition leader, Aaron Burr. The feud between Hamilton and Burr became so bitter that Burr challenged him to a duel. Hamilton accepted Burr's challenge even though he had no experience with firearms. Some speculate that Hamilton wanted to prove himself on "the field of honor" so he could eventually gain the respect of the army and lead America in a war against France. Whatever his hopes might have been, they were laid to rest at the duel in Weehawken, New Jersey when Burr's bullet found its mark and ended Hamilton's short but brilliant life.

Of all the delegates at the Convention, none spoke more openly and vehemently in favor of a strong national government and against democracy. Despite his own lowly birth, he thought little of the common man who, he believed, "seldom judged or determined right." Hamilton favored having a king in America, and, to balance the power of the monarch, he proposed a House of Representatives elected by the people for two-year terms and a Senate in which senators would hold office for life.

Hamilton held an equally extreme position on the powers of the national government. He actually suggested eliminating the state governments and reducing the states' functions to merely carrying out laws made at the national level and administered by governors appointed by the president. He also opposed having a bill of rights, which he thought would be dangerous. The government Hamilton envisioned for his adopted country would have resembled England's with a Senate modeled after the House of Lords, a House of Representatives resembling the British Commons, and a king-like chief executive serving for life with almost unlimited administrative powers.

Throughout his life, Hamilton devoted himself to public service and often came across as vain and personally disagreeable. He completely neglected his personal and family finances. Despite his high legal fees, his wealthy wife, and his excellent social connections, Hamilton often found himself penniless, while others — including many of his political associates and his father-in-law's friends — made money from the policies Hamilton proposed and implemented. In his opinion, what was good for the wealthy was good for the country, but Hamilton never profited financially from his years of devoted political service, and he died deeply in debt.

Rufus King of Massachusetts (1755-1827)

Rufus King, the son of a wealthy farmer-businessman, was born in what is today Maine. He attended Harvard College before practicing law in Newburyport, Massachusetts. King interrupted his law practice to serve as a brigadier general during the Revolution, and in 1784 he was elected to represent Massachusetts in the Congress under the Articles of Confederation. During his time in Congress, King introduced a bill to prevent slavery in the Northwest Territory.

In 1786, King married the only daughter of a very wealthy New York merchant; he spent the next summer representing Massachusetts at the Constitutional Convention and shortly thereafter settled in New York. In spite of his aristocratic views, King enjoyed an excellent reputation and great popularity in his adopted state. His personal charm, horsemanship, intellect, and good looks contributed to the high regard in which New Yorkers held him.

King lived comfortably throughout his entire life, benefiting from both his wife's and his father's wealth. He speculated in public securities in amounts of up to \$10,000 — quite a tidy sum in those days — and he bought up U.S. bank stock when it became available in 1791. Later he served as one of its directors.

Politically, King allied himself with Alexander Hamilton and became a leader in the Federalist Party. He twice ran unsuccessfully for Vice-President and served in the U.S. senate. His service as an ambassador to England – first under President John Adams, and later under Adams’s son – interrupted his otherwise continuous term as senator. King took ill shortly after his arrival for his second tour in England and returned to the United States, where he died at the age of 72.

King spoke frequently at the Constitutional Convention, expressing ardent nationalist views, favoring a long term for the U.S. president, defending Alexander Hamilton’s preference for making the U.S. a monarchy, and opposing the continued importation of slaves.

That Rufus King was outspoken on the aforementioned issues at the Convention was not unusual, for other delegates were forthright in presenting their positions; but the vehemence and force of his arguments made him stand out from his colleagues. He did not want to hear of a compromise on the issue of granting more votes in Congress to the more populated states and declared himself “full of astonishment that we should be ready to sacrifice the substantial good (from his proportional representation plan) to the ‘phantom’ of State sovereignty.”

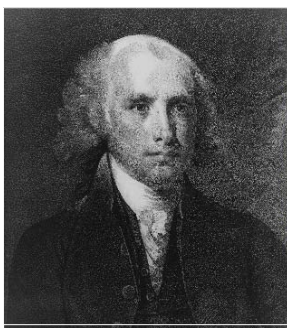
King also had strong views on allowing the importation of slaves. Their admission into the country, King said, “was a most grating circumstance.” His opposition derived in part from the notion that all states should be bound to defend one another – slavery made the states weaker and increased the danger of a rebellion.

John Lansing of New York (1754-1829)

John Lansing, one of the richest men in his party, owned over 40,000 acres of land. He enjoyed a reputation as a fine and generous host and prized himself on his ability to entertain all men of good taste, including his political opponents. Although not known for his great knowledge of the law, he started his successful legal practice at age twenty-one. Lansing served as a military aid to Hamilton’s father-in-law during the war, as a representative in the New York State Assembly (serving twice as speaker) and several terms as mayor of Albany. After the Convention, Lansing became Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court and stayed in politics for many years. He disappeared mysteriously in 1829 after leaving his hotel room in New York City to mail a letter; and was never seen again.

Lansing was sent to the Convention because his views on states’ rights and democracy directly opposed those of Hamilton. Given instructions only to amend the Articles of Confederation, he opposed the new Constitution because it tended to “consolidate the United States into one government.” He favored a plan of government in which each state would have one vote. Although he supported giving the national government power to regulate trade, enforce treaties, and collect taxes, he did not wish to go much further than that. He favored a bill of rights and opposed the completed Constitution it because it gave too much power to the national government.

James Madison of Virginia (1751-1836)



James Madison

It could be said that all of James Madison’s life was a preparation for the Convention and that his work at the Convention had appropriately earned him the title, “the father of the Constitution.” Also known as a “political monk,” Madison was born the first of ten children in a wealthy family. After receiving tutoring at home, he attended Princeton University where he

studied the history of ancient governments. Following graduation, Madison returned to his parents' plantation in order to tutor his younger brothers and sisters. In 1774, he became active in the protests against England, and at age twenty-five he helped to write the Constitution of Virginia. He served as an advisor to Governor Patrick Henry, and then as a delegate to the Constitutional Congress where he developed a reputation as an outspoken champion of a stronger national government. In Virginia, meanwhile, he opposed the state's decision to issue paper money to ease the problems of debtors and favored a system of public education.

Of all delegates at the Convention, Madison knew the most about the history of ancient and modern governments. He also knew most of the important people of his day. At the very beginning of the Convention, he supported a move to radically change the Articles of Confederation. To this end he wrote the Virginia Plan which was introduced by this state's governor, Edmund Randolph. In addition to taking a major role in the debates, Madison took the only good set of notes at the Convention. Afterwards, Madison, with help from Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, wrote the famous Federalist Papers, a series of 85 essays supporting ratification of the Constitution that are still assigned reading in college and high school political science courses.

After the Convention, Madison served in the House of Representatives, where he wrote the Bill of Rights and opposed the programs favored by Alexander Hamilton and George Washington. With Thomas Jefferson, Madison organized what has become the modern day Democratic Party. Later, he served for eight years as Secretary of State under Jefferson and followed his mentor into the Chief Executive office in 1809.

In favor of a strong central government during his pre-Constitution years, Madison feared that the states would be taken over by special interest groups that he called factions. Factions of debtors, creditors, landlords, landless people, farmers, and manufacturers clamored for their respective interests in each state. But Madison's most dreaded the faction consisted of the majority of the people. The smaller factions could be outvoted, he reasoned; the majority would be far harder to stop. •

Since he hailed from the largest state in the Union, Madison favored giving more representatives in Congress to the states with more people. He wanted the Senate to be elected by the House of Representatives, and the president chosen by both House and Senate, not the people. Although he owned slaves, Madison opposed admitting in the Constitution the idea that there "could be property in man." Had he the power, Madison would have ended slavery immediately.

James Madison's main interest lay in politics. He spent little time tending to his farm or to his law practice, and he put off marriage until late in his life. Most of his income came from the poor salaries given public officials and gifts from family or loans from friends; he left a very small estate when he died in 1836.

Luther Martin of Maryland (1748-1826)

One of the most interesting characters to attend the convention, Luther Martin earned a reputation for his love of alcohol and long speeches, his propensity to spend money, and his support of states' rights. Born to a poor family with nine children, Martin somehow obtained an education at Princeton University.

• Madison suggestions on how the "majority faction" could be prevented from taking over the government are highlighted in Chapter 4.

He graduated at age eighteen and then taught school while studying law. He established a successful law practice and invested his earnings in salt mines and homes left vacant by people who sided with England during the Revolution. He soon attracted the attention of powerful politicians, and was appointed attorney general for the state of Maryland. With a few interruptions, Martin held that job for thirty years.

From his position as Attorney General, Martin prosecuted Tories who had left for England during the Revolution and stripped them of their properties. He supported paper money and laws making it easier for debtors to pay what they owed. He argued unsuccessfully before the Supreme Court in 1819 against the constitutionality of the National Bank, and he successfully defended Aaron Burr against an accusation of treason. Martin died in 1826 at the home of his former client, Aaron Burr.

Martin arrived in Philadelphia long after the Convention started, but he immediately threw himself into the struggle to prevent “the large States from having all power in their hands,” and he launched numerous lengthy speeches that often bored the other delegates to distraction. He thought the national government served only one purpose – to protect the state governments – and he insisted that the states, like individuals, were by nature equal to each other. He consistently and vehemently opposed giving any more power to the national government, and he firmly committed himself to passing a Bill of Rights to protect the people. Although he himself owned six house servants of African descent, Luther Martin opposed slavery as “inconsistent with the principles of the revolution and dishonorable to the American character.”

Because he ultimately lost the battles on the issues he considered so important, Martin returned to Maryland in opposition to the Constitution. He made many strong speeches denouncing the delegates, claiming that they were interested only in increasing their power at the expense of the states and the people. As he saw it, other delegates who supported the Constitution “did not consider that either states or men had any rights at all.”

George Mason of Virginia (1725-1792)

One of the older men at the Convention, Mason was born rich and improved his financial position by an advantageous marriage. He spent most of his life taking care of his 5,000-acre holdings and his 300 slaves. Unlike most Virginians, Mason cared for the property himself and did not hire overseers to run it for him. Also, unlike most of the delegates, Mason preferred private life to public service. He quit serving in the Virginia House of Burgesses in 1769 because he grew tired of its “blathers,” and later he turned down an appointment to the US. Senate.

Despite Mason’s love of privacy, he played an integral part in Virginia politics for over thirty years. As neighbor to George Washington and friend to Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, and other famous Virginians, he often hosted the small group of men who planned the political campaigns that influenced Virginia’s and America’s history. He penned many famous documents, including a Declaration of Rights, and launched protests against the slave trade.

Mason ended a ten-year political retirement by attending the Constitutional Convention. There, he served an important role by using his excellent speaking skills to sway fellow delegates. But later he opposed the Constitution he helped write – in fact, he swore that he would rather chop off his hand than sign the Constitution. After the Convention, he retired to his plantation and kept out of politics until his death in 1792.

At the Convention, Mason feared that the other delegates would steer too far away from democracy and towards monarchy. Although he favored six-year terms for senators to protect “the right of property,” Mason thought people with property, money, or children should be allowed to vote because their possessions provided evidence that they had a “permanent common interest with the Society.” Mason tried to include a bill of rights in the Constitution, but failed in his attempt. He also wanted to limit the power of the president. In keeping with his democratic principles, he opposed the slave trade and argued strongly against slavery which he thought would “bring the judgment of heaven” on the country.

In essence, Mason wanted a national government that was, in Goldilocks fashion, neither too strong nor too weak. In the end, the Constitution did not suit him because he felt it differed too much from this idealized golden mean. He worried that the Constitution did not sufficiently restrict the powers of Congress and would allow the national government to strip the states of their powers. Furthermore, he dissented with other aspects of the Constitution because it lacked a bill of rights, continued the slave trade, gave too much power to the president, and established a senate that too frequently resembled a House of Lords.

Gouverneur Morris of Pennsylvania (1752-1816)



G. Morris

Born to one of the richest and most renowned families in New York, Gouverneur Morris had one brother who signed the Declaration of Independence and another who became a major general in the British army. His father died when he was ten, and his mother sided openly with the British. Morris himself often feared that crowds protesting British policies would destroy property belonging to wealthy Americans. Nevertheless, he sided with the colonists and played a leading role in the Continental Congress, where he earned a reputation for defending George Washington every time the commander-in-chief came under attack.

Morris was one of the most talkative members at the Constitutional Convention. He employed a great degree of wit and charm in his speeches, making up for a rather unpleasant appearance due to a missing leg and a severely burned arm. As chairman of the Committee on Style, he wrote the final draft of the Constitution and left his imprint on it. After the Convention, Morris served as ambassador to France, but he was replaced because he openly sided with the king after the French Revolution started. Morris spent the next ten years in Europe, and served in the US. Senate after his return

Like Hamilton, Morris was outspoken in his aristocratic views. He was particularly concerned that the masses of people whom he called “the ignorant and the dependent” would eventually become a majority. To prevent these commoners from controlling the country, Morris wanted senators to serve life-long terms, as the Lords did in England. He insisted that the senators not receive pay so none but the rich would serve. Morris also suggested making the president independent of the people by making it impossible to impeach him. Only on the issue of slavery, which he opposed as “wicked” and the “curse” of heaven, did Morris demonstrate democratic sentiment.

Morris also mirrored Hamilton’s views in his desire to establish a strong national government. He thought states the “bane of the country,” and wanted to “take out the teeth of these serpents.” He proposed, therefore, that the national government have the power to make laws “in all cases for the general interest of the Union.”

Although he found himself constantly in debt, Morris lived a luxurious life. Since he was not the oldest son, he inherited only 2,000 British pounds instead of the family estate. His successful law practice allowed him to buy the estate, but not to clear the debts it had incurred. His long career as a bachelor and a "ladies' man" ended with his marriage, which came six years before his death in 1816.

William Paterson of New Jersey (1745-1806)

The son of an Irish immigrant, Paterson came to the New Jersey in 1747. His father settled around Princeton and earned enough money to send his son to the local college. William graduated in 1763, studied law and passed the bar exam five years later. He started in politics to protest England's policies. During his long public career, William Paterson served his state in all levels of government. He started off on a town committee during the Revolution, became a state senator, the state attorney general, a United States senator, and later New Jersey's governor. After his term as governor, he returned to a successful private practice.

At the Convention, Paterson impressed others with his ability to speak and his understanding of the issues. On June 15, 1787, he laid the New Jersey Plan before the Convention. It called for each state to have one vote, just as it had under the Articles. Once the rights of the small states were protected by the establishment of a Senate, which gave them equal representation with the larger states, Paterson was willing to create a much stronger government than had previously existed. He would have all acts passed by Congress become "the Supreme law" of the states and give the president power to enforce these laws. Although the Constitution did not give the national government all the powers Paterson was willing to grant it, he wholeheartedly supported the new Constitution.

William Pierce of Georgia (1740-1789)

Little is known of William Pierce's early life. Even the circumstances of his birth are uncertain; according to some accounts he was born in Virginia, while others indicate that he might have been born in Georgia. Whatever the case, his public career began in 1776 when he became a captain in the Continental army. Later, he received a special award for his services from Congress in 1782.

Pierce had a great deal of trouble in business. One company he owned folded, and he had to pay for the second company with the dowry he received from his wife. A sudden decline in prices had disastrous consequences on the second business. Chosen in 1786 to represent Georgia in the Continental Congress, Pierce spent most of the time it was in session tending to business affairs in New York. Later, he left the Constitutional Convention to return to a failing business. Although Pierce managed to save the business, he never escaped from the debts he incurred while running it.

William Pierce is probably best known for a series of descriptions he wrote about the other delegates to the Convention. The nature of his political views, much like the details of his early life, is unclear. He came from a small state and favored giving every state an equal vote in Congress, but he thought little of state government and believed that "state distinctions" should be sacrificed for the general government. Eventually, he agreed with the compromise that gave America a Senate chosen by the states and a House of Representatives chosen by the people. He favored three-year terms for senators rather than the six proposed. It may be assumed that he was more inclined to democratic solutions to most problems than many of his fellow delegates.

Charles Pinckney of South Carolina (1758-1822)

Charles Pinckney's plans to study law in England were thwarted by the outbreak of the American Revolution. Pinckney, the son of a wealthy plantation owner, therefore finished his studies at age of twenty-one, began to practice law and served in the state legislature. The next year he was captured while enlisted as an officer in defense of his city, Charleston, South Carolina. After his release in 1781, Pinckney returned to his law practice. Three years later he represented South Carolina in the Continental Congress. He came to the Constitutional Convention as its youngest member and lied about his real age to make himself appear even younger. Handsome, well read, hard working, and self-confident, Pinckney flaunted his intellect at the Convention by interjecting his views on every topic under consideration. After playing what he claimed was an important part in the Convention, Pinckney went on to become governor of South Carolina, a United States senator, a representative, and an ambassador.

Pinckney was a wealthy man who owned a very lavish town house in Charleston, a plantation, \$14,000 of government securities, and over 100 slaves. Not surprisingly, he wanted to ensure that the wealthy people in America would control its government. He proposed that the president have at least \$100,000 in cash and/or property, and that judges and representatives possess only somewhat less wealth. He insisted that senators be appointed by the state and serve for life. Pinckney believed the people could not be trusted to elect the president, and he thought Congress should have the privilege of electing the nation's chief executive. An election by the people, Pinckney claimed. "will be led by a few active and designing men." He believed that the threat of impeachment, could weaken his position and make him vulnerable As Pinckney speculated, "[I]f he opposes a favorite law, the two Houses will combine against him."

Pinckney also wanted to make the national government strong and to keep the states in their place. He proposed that the national government should be able to veto any state law that it considered improper.

Pinckney wished to have representation in Congress on the basis of population. He opposed any plan that would give the states an equal vote in even one branch of the legislature. He favored a bill of rights and proposed one that would include the freedom of the press, freedom from having troops quartered in private homes, and the guarantee of no standing armies in peacetime. He also ardently supported slavery and opposed any plan that would prohibit the slave trade. Moreover, he wanted a provision to ensure the return of slaves that escaped to the north.

Edmund Randolph of Virginia (1753-1813)

Born into a well-known Virginia family of lawyer-politicians, Edmund Randolph continued the family tradition. He excelled as a student at William and Mary, and then studied law under his father. The Revolution split the Randolph family; the father, mother, and two sisters remained loyal to England and left Virginia soon after the war began. Edmund's uncle, Peyton, served as the president of the Continental Congress while Edmund stayed in the colonies and served in the convention that wrote the new Virginia constitution. Governor Patrick Henry appointed young Randolph attorney general, a position that did not prevent him from also representing Virginia in the Continental Congress. In 1786, Randolph became governor and, as the leader of the Virginia delegation to the Convention, presented the Virginia Plan (actually written by James Madison). The plan called for a much stronger national government as well as a House of Representatives elected by the people of each state with the largest number of delegates going to the states with the largest population. The House, in turn, would elect both the senate and the president.

Edmund Randolph opened the main business of the Convention with a long speech criticizing the Articles of Confederation. He blamed all the Confederation government's problems with paper money and trade on the weakness of this document. Later, he also attributed the troubles of the country to the "follies of democracy." To correct these evils, Randolph wanted a balanced government. An aristocratic senate, he thought, should balance a democratic House of Representatives. Randolph also favored balancing governmental powers between Congress and the states. Although he wanted the national government to have the power to defend itself, he did not want individual states to relinquish too many of their powers.

Randolph felt that the completed Constitution had failed to establish a balanced government; he feared the Founders had tipped the scale too far in the direction of Congress and the national government. Nevertheless, George Washington convinced Randolph to support the Constitution and he played an integral part in getting it ratified in Virginia. Randolph eventually served under Washington as Attorney General and later as Secretary of State. When accused of passing national secrets to the French ambassador, Randolph proclaimed his innocence but resigned his post and permanently retired from public service.

While in public office, Randolph sometimes complained that his father had not handed a fortune down to him. When he finally inherited his Uncle Peyton's estate, it was so burdened with debt that it failed to benefit him financially. He did very well after retiring from public life, however, and died leaving an estate of 7,000 acres, 200 slaves, several houses, and about \$80,000.

George Read of Delaware (1733-1798)

One of six sons of a very wealthy father, George Read received an excellent education that was so beneficial that he decided he no longer needed his father's inheritance. Read started practicing law at age twenty. Although he never earned a great deal from his law practice, his investment in government bonds allowed him to live lavishly in a large mansion overlooking the Delaware River. At thirty, he was appointed state Attorney General and later served on the Delaware General Assembly, where he spoke out against British policy. He served in the First and Second Continental Congresses where he attempted to steer the colonies away from the possibility of war with England. He voted against independence in 1776 but signed the Declaration nevertheless. He eventually served his state as a Governor, Senator, Representative, and Chief Justice.

Read came to the Convention with instructions not to change the rule that gave each state one vote. Overwhelmed by the representatives of the large states, who pushed for representation by population, he appealed to John Dickinson for help and urged him to hurry to Philadelphia to assist him in the defense of small states.

Despite opposition to state representation in Congress based on population, Read favored making the national government more powerful. He wanted to give it the power to veto laws passed by the states, and he hoped that the people's attachment to their states would be "extinguished."

Some of Read's other views mirrored those expressed by Dickinson and Hamilton. He wanted to have senators, like judges and the members of the British House of Lords, hold their seats for life. In addition, he wished to give the president the right to appoint the senators and the power to veto laws passed by Congress. He felt that Congress should not have the right to override the president's veto, a

move that would make the President in America more powerful than the King of England. In fact, Read's entire plan for government closely resembled England's.

John Rutledge of South Carolina (1739-1800)

As was the custom among upper-class southerners, Rutledge was home-tutored and then sent to England to further his education. He returned to Charleston in 1760 and began practicing law. In 1763 he won all 52 cases he accepted. Thereafter, he commanded the highest legal fees in the state. Before the Revolution began, John Rutledge owned five plantations, over 240 slaves, and nine different pieces of town property, and he earned a reputation as one of the best and most successful lawyers in the entire country.

Rutledge initially experienced as much success in politics as he had in law. Elected to the South Carolina Assembly at age 22, he was appointed attorney general three years later and served as South Carolina's delegate to the Stamp Act Congress in 1765. He also served in the Continental Congress, played a major role in writing the state constitution, and was elected governor of South Carolina. He resigned his position as governor, however, because some changes made in the Constitution were too democratic for his taste. Furthermore, he failed in his attempts to recover the property the British took from him for siding with the colonists during the war, and he decided not to continue his law practice after the war ended.

At the Convention, Rutledge argued that office-holders should own large amounts of property. He did not apply the same rule to voters because he feared "this would make an enemy of all who would be excluded." Rutledge proposed that the president serves a seven-year term and that he be eligible for re-election and impeachment if necessary.

In defending the slave trade, Rutledge argued that "religion and humanity have nothing to do with it." He claimed that "interest alone... is the governing principle with nations," and he told northerners at the Convention that they too would benefit from the slave trade because slaves were shipped in boats built and owned in the North. Rutledge later declared to the Convention that North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia would never approve of the Constitution if it took away their right to import slaves.

Rutledge opposed giving the national government the power to veto laws passed by the states. "If nothing else," he argued, "this alone would damn and ought to damn the Constitution." Moreover, Rutledge proposed a detailed bill of rights. He favored the prohibition of a bill of attainder (which would allow for the legislature itself to convict a criminal) and ex post facto laws (laws passed making a crime after an act is committed), but he supported the suspension of habeas corpus (putting people in jail without due cause).

After the Constitutional Convention, Rutledge served his nation as a member of the Supreme Court. The death of his wife in 1792 so broke Rutledge's health and spirit that he did little in the way of public service in the last eight years of his life.

Roger Sherman of Connecticut (1721-1793)

Roger Sherman was a jack-of-all-trades. Born to a farming family in Newton, Massachusetts, Sherman, at one point or another, worked as a farmer, shoemaker, surveyor, storekeeper, landowner, printer, and lawyer in addition to holding a variety of government offices. Although he had little formal education,

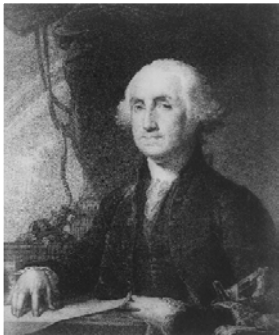
Sherman taught himself everything he had to know and he earned a reputation as an able-minded politician who was extremely capable of accomplishing anything he set out to do. He never accrued much wealth because his eldest sons were failures in business and needed his financial assistance. He spent a great deal of money buying government bonds that weren't repaid until the year before his death. In the meantime, Sherman stayed out of debtors' prison mainly because of his reputation for honesty and because of the help he received from his daughters.

Sherman entered politics in 1755 with his election to Connecticut's General Assembly. He later served on the Governor's council and in the Continental Congress. One of the few Americans who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the U.S. Constitution, Sherman also revised Connecticut's laws, served as mayor of New Haven, and represented Connecticut in Congress. He died in 1793, shortly after his appointment to the U.S. Senate.

Sherman is best known for, along with Benjamin Franklin, introducing the compromise that gave America its two houses of Congress. He also pushed for compromise in other positions that he took at the Convention. He favored increasing the power of the national government while protecting the rights of states. He wanted to give Congress the power to make laws in all cases that would affect the whole country, but wanted to allow the states to handle all cases that would only affect them. Sherman favored frequent elections to "preserve the good behavior of the rulers," but he thought that the people should not directly vote for their rulers because "they lack information and are likely to be misled."

Although Sherman opposed slavery, he did not want to end the slave trade for fear that the southern states would not accept the Constitution. He thought a bill of rights unnecessary because he trusted the states to protect the rights of the people.

George Washington (1732-1799)



G. Washington

Even though he had been elected president of the Constitutional Convention, George Washington hardly said a word during the three months it was in session. His presence and approval, however, had much to do with the success of the enterprise. Washington was so respected, honored, and admired that all who speculated about the presidency knew that George Washington would be elected to that office. Indeed, in the nation's first presidential election, Washington was the unanimous choice of the electors.

Washington earned his reputation through many years of devoted service to his country. His career started in 1753 with an expedition into western Pennsylvania to warn France not to trespass on land claimed by England. During the French and Indian War, Washington commanded the Virginia militia, and later devoted himself to his plantation at Mount Vernon. He increased its size from 2,000 to 8,000 acres and lived the life of a Virginia planter with fox hunting, weeklong parties, service in the House of Burgesses, and involvement in local politics. Following the passage of the Stamp Act, Washington played a leading role in defending the colonists' cause. He was elected to serve in the First Continental Congress and appointed commander-in-chief of American armies in 1775. For the next eight years, Washington served his country with dogged determination and led his poorly equipped and trained forces to ultimate victory.

When, in the closing days of the war, Washington received word that some of his officers planned to establish a monarchy with himself as King, he declined, and reminded them of the ideals for which

they fought. Soon afterwards, he took leave of his forces and returned to the planter's life he loved so well. His country called him into service again, however, first to the Convention and then as president. Washington died in 1799, only three years after retiring from public life.

Washington supported a strong government, actively opposed the Articles of Confederation because it did not give the national government enough power, and was instrumental in calling for the Constitutional Convention. At the Convention he warned his fellow delegates to do what was right and not to merely "please the people." Although the more detailed aspects of his views are not well-known, one can assume that he supported a plan to give the larger states more votes in Congress and to provide an aristocratic Senate to offset a democratic House of Representatives; that he called for an especially constituted group of electors to elect the President; and that he opposed including a bill of rights in the Constitution. Although he owned hundreds of slaves, Washington was sufficiently opposed to this institution that he made arrangements to free them after his own and his wife's death.

Throughout his life, Washington was obsessed with acquiring property, often borrowing money to increase his holdings. Despite refusing his Revolutionary war salary and spending much time in public service, Washington owned land in six different states and left an estate valued \$530,000. Washington was said to be one of the richest men in America. Much of his wealth could be attributed to his advantageous marriage to Martha, his shrewd land purchases, and his careful management of his plantation.

Hugh Williamson of North Carolina (1735-1819)

Hugh Williamson, whose mother was rumored to have been captured by the pirate Blackbeard, served as a minister for three years before going abroad to study medicine. While in Europe he wrote on a number of different subjects including American rights, comets, and electric eels. A humorous and well-mannered man of talent and education, Williamson made enough money in his medical career to invest large amounts in western lands and government bonds.

Williamson personally witnessed the Boston Tea Party while waiting to sail on a ship to England. When he arrived in London, he recounted the details of the incident to Benjamin Franklin. Upon his return to America, he practiced medicine in his native North Carolina and started a business with his brother that involved trading with the French West Indies. The British eventually closed the business. During the Revolution, Williamson served as surgeon general of the North Carolina militia. In this position he saved many lives by taking an unusually active part in inoculating his soldiers against smallpox and improving health and sanitary conditions.

Entering politics in 1782, Williamson served in the state legislature and represented North Carolina in the Continental Congress, where he played an active role trying to give the government more power. After the Convention, he worked hard to have the Constitution ratified in North Carolina. Williamson later served two terms as a representative in Congress, and retired from politics to write. Among his works is a two-volume history of North Carolina.

Like Benjamin Franklin, Williamson was both a democrat and a nationalist. Although he wanted to make the national government more powerful (he had a personal interest in doing so because of his land holdings and government bonds), Williamson would not allow it to veto laws passed by the states. He opposed restricting the right to vote, and wanted to limit the power of the President by allowing Congress to override his vetoes with a two-thirds majority vote of both houses. He also favored giving Congress the power to impeach and convict the President for malpractice and neglect of duty. He had more faith in the House of Representatives, which would be elected directly by the people, than he had in

the Senate, which would be chosen by the state legislatures. He favored a bill of rights in the Constitution that, among other things, would guarantee the right of trial by jury. Although personally opposed to slavery, Williamson represented his state's views on this issue because he feared North Carolina would not join the Union if it was forced to stop importing slaves. He thought it was wrong to force a state to do anything that was not absolutely necessary.

James Wilson of Pennsylvania (1742-98)

Born in Scotland, where he received an excellent education, Wilson came to America at the age of twenty-three. There he supported himself by tutoring, while he studied law under the famous John Dickinson. In 1767 he moved west, won some important land claim cases, and began to buy land on his own account. He eventually became a successful lawyer, politician, and scholar, but a terrible businessman who made many reckless and ill-advised investments that eventually caused him to flee his creditors and die deeply in debt while still on the run.

Wilson's early political career revealed several strange twists and turns in loyalties. An early supporter of America's rights against England, Wilson won fame by writing a pamphlet that argued the colonists' case. He served in the Continental Congress, where he advocated making peace with England. Only a last-minute switch by Wilson put Pennsylvania in favor of voting for independence. Shortly afterwards, Wilson's opposition to the new democratic constitution of his state led to his dismissal from Congress whereupon he moved to Philadelphia and did legal work for those who favored England. This so angered the patriots that a mob attacked his house. He somehow gained support after the incident, however, and was elected to serve in the Continental Congress.

At the Constitutional Convention, most of Wilson's positions favored democracy and a stronger national government. Although he liked the English system with its House of Lords, Wilson supported the election of senators by the voters instead of the state legislatures. He stood out amongst his fellow delegates by insisting that the people, and not a specially chosen group of electors, choose the president. He wanted the president to serve for only three years and would make him eligible for re-election. Nevertheless, he would make him powerful enough to veto any law passed by Congress, and Congress would not be given the right to override his veto.

Wilson favored making the national government much stronger than it was under the Articles. Unlike states' rights advocates, Wilson did not believe that the national government would destroy the states; instead, he feared that the states would destroy the national government. To prevent this from happening, he strongly favored giving the national government power to veto any law passed by the states. Because he wanted such a powerful national government, Wilson opposed limiting its power with a bill of rights.

Wilson had played a leading role at the Convention. As a reward for his efforts, he earned a position on the Supreme Court but could not enter certain states because he was wanted for bad debts.

Suggested Student Exercises:

1. After reading and taking notes on eight delegate biographies chosen at random, select three whose views you would like to represent in a mock Constitutional Convention in your classroom. (Note: you may select delegates because of the controversial nature of their views, because you agree with their position on issues, or because you admire the people they were.)
2. Write a brief statement why you selected these three.