

Masonic Signers of the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

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Eight Signers of the Declaration of Independence are listed by The Masonic Service Association as being "generally accepted as Masons." They are John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, William Whipple, Richard Stockton, George Walton, Robert Treat Paine, William Hooper and Joseph Hewes. These are the signatures on the cover of this issue of the *Empire State Mason*.

Two more, of whom we are fairly certain, might have been included: Thomas McKean, of Delaware; and Thomas Nelson, Jr., of Virginia. There are many others who were probably members but whose records have not survived "the lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance and the devastation of war."

We take patriotic pride in the public record of all the Signers of the Declaration of Independence. We take fraternal pride in our special relationship to the many who were Masons.

The Masonic membership of the following Signers is based on the statements of at least one of the authorities quoted in the Masonic Service Association. Many Masonic writers have included these patriots during the past 183 years. They are: Josiah Bartlett, William Ellery, Elbridge Gerry, Lyman Hall, John Hart, Stephen Hopkins, Samuel Huntington, Thomas Jefferson, Francis Lightfoot Lee, Richard Henry Lee, Francis Lewis, Philip Livingston, Thomas McKean, Robert Morris, Thomas Nelson, Jr., John Penn, George Read, Benjamin Rush, Edward Rutledge, Roger Sherman, James Smith, Matthew Thornton, William Williams, John Witherspoon.

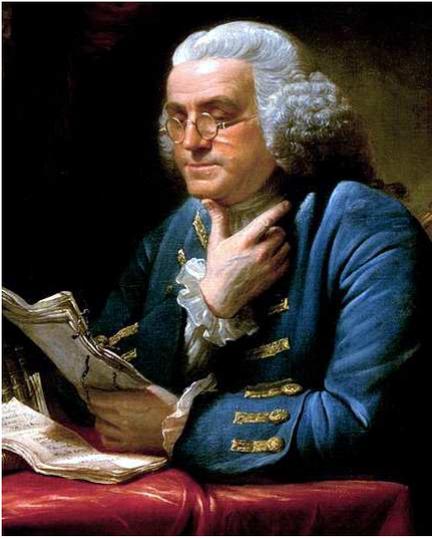
The most famous signature is a Masonic one. John Hancock was made a Mason in Merchants Lodge 277 while visiting in Quebec, Canada, in January 1762. He was born January 12, 1737, at Quincy, Massachusetts, was graduated from Harvard in 1754, and entered his uncle's great mercantile business in Boston, which he later in-

of St. Andrew, Boston, October 14, 1762. His outstanding public service began a few years later and continued until his death in 1793. He was a Congovernor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.



JOHN HANCOCK

The most famous man who signed the Declaration has the most distinguished Masonic record. Benjamin Franklin was a Mason for almost sixty years—Junior Grand Warden, Grand Master, Secretary and Provincial Grand Master during his early years in Pennsylvania, and later Master and honorary member of Lodges in France. His edition of the *Anderson Constitutions*, 1734, was the first Masonic book printed in America. His career as a business man, scientist, author, and statesman are known to all. He was born in Boston, January 17, 1706, was made a Mason in St. John's Lodge, Philadelphia, in 1731, and died in Philadelphia,



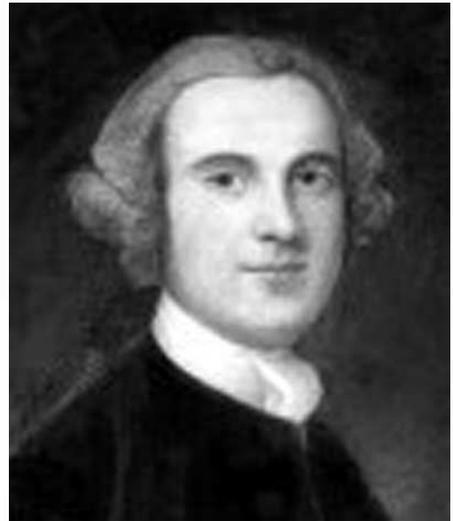
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

A member of St. John's Lodge 1, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, June 2, 1752, William Whipple was born January 14, 1730, in Kittery, Maine, went to sea at an early age, and then became a successful merchant and leading citizen of Portsmouth. In 1775 when American difficulties with the British Parliament became acute, he entered public life, and served in the Continental Congress from 1776 to 1779. He died November 28, 1785.



WILLIAM WHIPPLE

One of the most tragic lives of any of the Signers was that of Richard Stockton, who was a charter member and the first Master of St. John's Lodge, Princeton, New Jersey, December 27, 1765. He was born at Princeton, October 1, 1730, admitted to the bar in 1754, and elected to Congress in 1776. Soon after signing the Declaration of Independence, he was captured by the British and imprisoned in New York, where his health was broken. He died in Princeton, February 28, 1781.



RICHARD STOCKTON

A visitor in Unanimity Lodge, Edenton, North Carolina, on St. John the Evangelist's Day, December 27, 1776, Joseph Hewes may have received the Degrees in Philadelphia. He was born January 23, 1730, in New Jersey, educated at Princeton, engaged in business in Philadelphia and then in North Carolina, and became an important member of the Continental Congress. While in Congress he was the first executive head of the United States Navy. He died November 10, 1779.



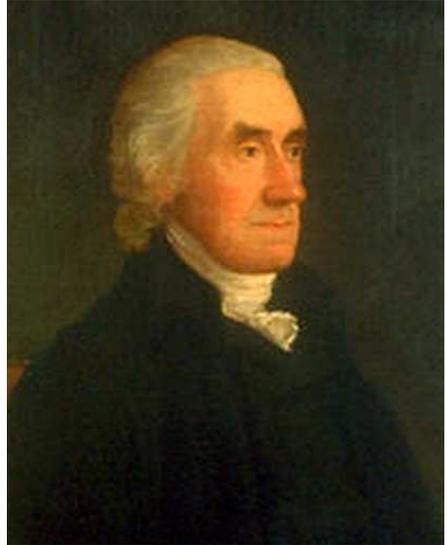
JOSEPH HEWES

Made a Mason sometime between 1775 and 1785, George Walton in the latter year took his Degrees all over again in Solomon's Lodge 1, Savannah, Georgia, when the change was made from "modern" to "ancient" Jurisdiction. His name appears in Solomon's minutes several times thereafter. He was born in Virginia in 1741, admitted to the bar in Georgia in 1774, and died at Augusta, Georgia, February 2, 1804.



GEORGE WALTON

There was a Brother Robert Treat Paine at the Provincial Grand Lodge celebration of the feast of St. John the Baptist at Roxbury, Massachusetts, June 26, 1759. He is believed to have been the Signer of the Declaration of Independence who was born March 11, 1731, at Boston, lived there as a successful lawyer and respected statesman, and died May 11, 1814. He signed the "Olive Branch Petition" in 1775, as well as the "Declaration" in 1776.

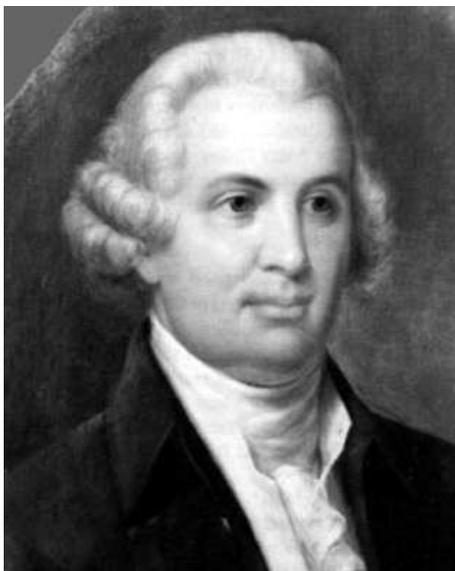


ROBERT TREAT PAINE

Continued

Masonborough, North Carolina, traditionally received its name from Hanover Lodge, which met there before the reorganization of the Grand Lodge in 1787. William Hooper is believed to have been a member in Masonborough. He was born in Massachusetts, June 17, 1742, graduated from Harvard, studied law in Boston, and moved to North Carolina in 1767, where he was brilliantly successful in the practice of law as well as in public life. He died at Hillsboro, North Carolina, October 14, 1790.

Credit: The above article is reprinted from the May issue of The Empire State Mason.



WILLIAM HOOPER

Aside: A painting by John Trumbull shows all of the signers or the Declaration of Independence. The painting is shown on an early US stamp (#120) and later provided on four stamps in a series (#1691 to 1694). A part of the painting is also shown on the American Bicentennial

Souvenir sheet (#1697) with five stamps showing specific individuals.

The four stamps in a series (#1691 to 1694) have been used to provide the key to the individuals shown in the painting, as provided on the next page.

Since the article provided here was published, 29 of the signers have been identified as definitely, or very likely, Freemasons. Those who can be definitely identified as Freemasons (i.e., their lodge is known) are as follows:

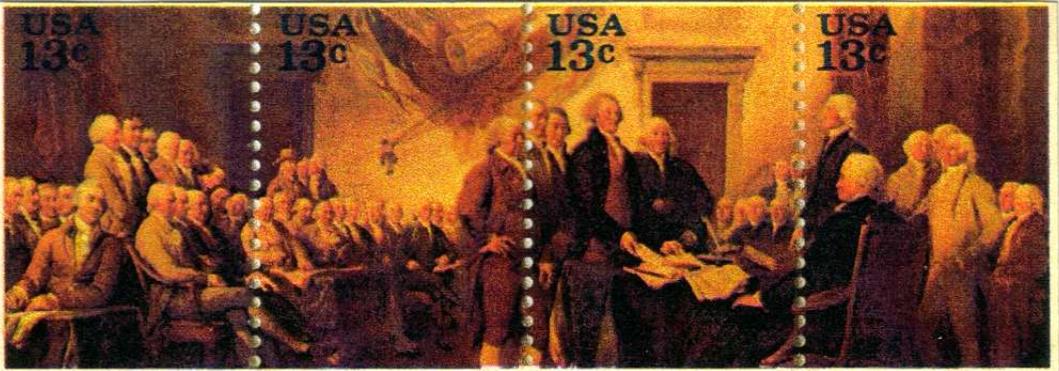
1. DICKINSON, JOHN
2. FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN
3. HANCOCK, JOHN
4. HOOPER, WILLIAM
5. LIVINGSTON, ROBERT R.
6. STOCKTON, RICHARD
7. WALTON, GEORGE

The other 22 possible or probably Freemasons have been determined in accordance with evidence that suggests or indicates they were such. In some cases, this evidence is visits to lodges (i.e., recorded as a visitor). Normally, one would have to be a Freemason to visit a lodge. In other cases letters or certain activities indicate Masonic membership.

It is only through the passage of time that information surfaces and we can confirm Masonic information. Now that we have the Internet, information is being provided quickly and efficiently, so we will likely uncover other facts much faster than in the past as we move forward.

Ed.

Reference: MP Vol. 16, No. 3, November 1959



JULY 4, 1776 : JULY 4, 1776 : JULY 4, 1776 : JULY 4, 1776

USA #1691 TO 1694, ISSUED 1976
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE
 (From a painting by John Trumbull)



- | | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. George Wythe | 13. William Floyd | 25. William Hooper | 37. Francis Lewis |
| 2. William Whipple | 14. Arthur Middleton | 26. Joseph Hewes | 38. John Witherspoon |
| 3. Josiah Bartlett | 15. Thomas Heyward Jr. | 27. George Walton | 39. Samuel Huntington |
| 4. Thomas Lynch Jr. | 16. Charles Carroll | 28. James Wilson | 40. William Williams |
| 5. Benjamin Harrison | 17. Robert Morris | 29. Abraham Clark | 41. Oliver Wolcott |
| 6. Richard Henry Lee | 18. Thomas Willing | 30. Francis Hopkinson | 42. Charles Thomson |
| 7. Samuel Adams | 19. Benjamin Rush | 31. John Adams | 43. John Hancock |
| 8. George Clinton | 20. Elbridge Gerry | 32. Roger Sherman | 44. George Read |
| 9. William Paca | 21. Robert Treat Paine | 33. Robert Livingston | 45. John Dickinson |
| 10. Samuel Chase | 22. Stephen Hopkins | 34. Thomas Jefferson | 46. Edward Rutledge |
| 11. Richard Stockton | 23. William Ellery | 35. Benjamin Franklin | 47. Thomas McKean |
| 12. Lewis Morris | 24. George Clymer | 36. Thomas Nelson | 48. Philip Livingston |