The Second Continental Congress Dossier

Connecticut Colony

Connecticut experiences a large autonomy and freedom under British rule. However, starting in 1765 with the enactment of the Stamp Act, opposition to the British Parliament grew and quickly overwhelmed the supporters of the British crown. Mobs harassed Stamp Act collectors and boycotting and non-importation policies were adopted by Connecticut. Connecticut also sent delegates to the Stamp Act Congress and has set up Committees of Correspondence with other colonies. However, Connecticut leaders are concerned that the mobs may go too far and deter support from moderates as well as make Britain intervene and wish for a controlled effort in addressing the grievances the colony has with Britain.

Roger Sherman

Roger Sherman is a successful businessman, landowner, and lawyer who has dedicated a lot of effort to bettering his colony and community. He served on the colonial legislature, was a county judge, and commissary for Connecticut troops before being elected to represent Connecticut in the Congress. In Congress, Sherman is seen as a model New England representative: stern, spare with his words, direct with speech, and always standing up for his principles. Sherman has stated, “The Colonies are not bound to the King or Crown by the act of settlement, but by their consent to it.”

Silas Deane

Originally a lawyer from Connecticut, Deane’s marriage to a widow saw him take over the merchant business of his wife’s late first husband. After success as a merchant, Deane got involved in politics eventually serving as Secretary of the Connecticut Committee of Correspondence and then representing the colony in the First and Second Continental Congress. Deane supports the Continental Congress establishing its own army and navy yet does not always agree with his colony’s attitudes. Deane, a leader of the young political figures in Connecticut is in the same colonial delegation as men thirty years his elder and is not pleased with the presence of Sherman in the Congress.

Eliphalet Dyer

Eliphalet Dyer was born in Windham, Connecticut. Dyer received the nickname Mr. Susquehanna for pushing for Connecticut to get the region form Pennsylvania. Despite similarity to Sherman’s age, Dyer is extremely talkative, commonly not completing his sentences, and attempts to live as a British aristocrat. Dyer was the first member of Connecticut’s committee of correspondence. Dyer went to England during his Susquehanna Campaign and grew fearful of the future of the colonies as he witnessed the growing imperialism of Britain. In 1764, Dyer
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wrote to the Connecticut Governor, “bid Farewell to Freedom and Liberty, burn their Charters, and make the best of Thraldom and Slavery.”

Delaware

This Middle Colony was also referred to as the breadbasket colony due to the variety of crops it grows and the overwhelming amount of wheat exported to Great Britain. Delaware, like most of the middle colonies, is torn on the possibility of independence with Britain with still a high population in support of remaining British subjects.

Caesar Rodney

Caesar Rodney received no formal education but was highly successful in politics even at a young age. Furthermore, Rodney was a leading patriot against the actions of Britain. He was a member of the Stamp Act Congress in 1965, member of Delaware Committee of Correspondence, and a military leader of the colonial militia. Rodney further supported the defense of his state and support of the Continental Army.

Thomas McKean

Thomas McKean immediately got engaged in law and politics and served three different colonies over the course of his career. After passing the Pennsylvania bar before reaching the age of 21, he would later be a Supreme Justice in Pennsylvania. McKean also served in the Delaware Assembly, the Stamp Act Congress, and then Speaker of the Assembly of Delaware before representing the colony in the Continental Congress. McKean’s biggest anti-British action to this point was making all New Jersey law files be recorded on unstamped paper.

George Read

Georges Read started a successful law practice in Newcastle, Delaware. His success landed him three attorney general positions which he held until joining the First Continental Congress. Read attended the Stamp Act Congress and supports non importation policies. But, despite joining the Delaware Committee of Correspondence and being active in the patriotic movement, Read questions whether independence is the correct action at this point.

Georgia

Georgia is the youngest of the thirteen colonies and one of the most reluctant to join in discourse addressing colonial dissatisfactions with the British Parliament. This is due to Native Americans and the popularity of Royal Governor James Wright. Wright’s ability to make temporary peace with Native American tribes, increase settlement in Georgia, and receive funds from the British Parliament has deterred revolutionary spirit in every part of Georgia except St. John’s Parish. Further, violence caused by Cherokee Indians threatens Georgia’s security and makes the colony question whether it is ready to pick a fight with Britain.
Lyman Hall

Lyman Hall originally a Congregational Minister eventually abandoned his religious career for one in medicine. Hall also became a plantation owner and being involved in the patriotic movement in the South was elected to the Continental Congress in 1775 representing St. John’s Parish in Georgia. Hall was the leader in St. Johns Parish in instigating resentment to British rule but most of the colony still supports the British crown. Hall only represents one parish and is hesitant to cast a vote that would represent the entire colony of Georgia.

Button Gwinnett

Button Gwinnett was born in England and despite starting a mercantile business in Bristol, England, he would move to South Carolina and then Savannah, Georgia. By 1765, Gwinnett had a successful mercantile business in Savannah. However, dissatisfied with his profession, in 1768 Gwinnett liquidated his business to purchase a plantation in St. Johns Parish. He became close friends with Lyman Hall, the leading physician in the Parish. Gwinnett, late to political involvement compared to other delegates, still made large contributions primarily with raising a fighting force.

Archibald Bulloch

Archibald Bulloch was born in Charles Town, South Carolina to a well off family headed by Reverend Bulloch who was also a successful plantation owner. After the family moved to Savannah, Georgia, Bulloch passed the bar and became a member of the Common House of Assembly in 1768. Upon being elected Speaker of the House in 1772, Colonial Governor Habersham was unhappy with the vote and eventually dissolved the assembly. Bulloch would devote his energy to bettering his colony of residence and uniting them with the other colonies. Bulloch was known to be firm in his opinions and bold in action.

Province of Massachusetts Bay

Massachusetts is the center of resistance to British rule. Massachusetts is currently the only colony experiencing violence between colonists and British soldiers. Furthermore, it is the location where the Sons of Liberty, Committees of Correspondence, and the idea of the Continental Congress were started. With Boston in the hands of British troops, the harbor blockaded by British ships, Massachusetts is being punished by the British and at the very least wants to be restored to normal colonial status. However, Massachusetts appears to have had enough with the ‘injustices’ of the British parliament.

John Adams

John Adams was a successful lawyer who gained patriotic appeal through his activities against the Stamp Act. Adams served in the Massachusetts Assembly before being elected to the First and Second Continental Congress. Adams’s involvement in the Congress is unparalleled with the
amount of committees he serves and chairs. Despite representing the British soldiers in the Boston Massacre, John Adams is one of the loudest delegates in the Congress for the cause of independence, which sometimes makes other delegates attempt to ignore him.

**Robert Treat Paine**

A Massachusetts native, Paine was a minister, sailor, lawyer, and finally politician. He served on the Provincial Assembly and then the First and Second Continental Congress. Paine served on a few committees in the First Congress including one that determined the rules of debate and further signed the Olive Branch Petition in 1775. Paine is known in the Congress as the “objection maker” as he seemed to oppose any resolution brought up by any other delegate.

**Samuel Adams**

A leading patriot in the call for independence from Britain, Samuel Adams was an excellent orator and politician. The original proposer of a Continental Congress, Adams was a member of the Provincial Council in 1774, founder of the Sons of Liberty, and envisioned the Boston Committee of Correspondence. Despite representing the same colony, Samuel Adams despises his cousin John Adams, perhaps for representing the British soldiers accused in the Boston Massacre.

**Maryland**

Maryland is currently divided on how to deal with Britain. The coalition led by Samuel Chase and William Paca, co-founder of Maryland Sons of Liberty, has recently become the most powerful group in Maryland politics. However, the reconciliation coalition headed by Thomas Stone is nearly as influential and shows another Middle colony politically divided.

**Samuel Chase**

Samuel Chase was born in London but served an apprenticeship to become a lawyer in Annapolis, Maryland. Chase eventually would be elected to the Maryland lower house in a highly competitive election which made him a prominent political figure in Annapolis. Starting with the Stamp Act, Chase would go from a loyal British subject to eventually considering the possibility of independence. His political partner is William Paca who together run the coalition in power in Maryland.

**Thomas Stone**

Thomas Stone was a political rival of the Paca and Chase coalition in both Maryland politics and representing Maryland in the Continental Congress. Originally a lawyer, Stone became involved in Maryland politics and would serve on the Charles County Committee of Correspondence. Stone was a quiet man who hated war and hoped for reconciliation, and it is no surprise he signed the Olive Branch Petition in 1775.
Thomas Johnson

Thomas Johnson was a home school Maryland native. After being admitted to the bar, Johnson served in the Maryland Provincial Assembly starting in 1762, would attend the Stamp Act Congress, and be a member of the Committee of Correspondence. He currently sits with Benjamin Franklin on a committee looking for European aid to the colonies. Johnson believes that separation from Britain is a possible and agreeable action.

North Carolina

In 1774 when the invitation for a Continental Congress was sent to the colonies, North Carolina Royal Governor, Josiah Martin, did not call the colony’s provincial assembly into session to send delegates. In response, North Carolina created their first independent government body in their Provincial Congress which elected members to serve in Philadelphia. Despite some issues with the British government, North Carolina comes to the Congress looking for reconciliation, not to start a war. Furthermore, the Continental Congress representatives are members of the Congress and hold colonial political influence. Therefore, their decisions are not just for the interest of the colonies, but specifically maintaining their personal influence and the influence of the colony.

John Penn

John Penn was a private practice lawyer originally from the colony of Virginia. He moved to Granville, North Carolina and established a private law practice in 1774 and immediately became a gentleman in the political community. He served in 1774 for the provincial government and now represents his new home colony in the Continental Congress. Penn, unlike his fellow delegates, did not attend the First Continental Congress and is not from the coastal region of North Carolina and his opinions often differ with those of his fellow delegates. Penn pushed for reconciliation and guarantee of American liberties as he predicted commercial and monetary issues with declaring independence.

Joseph Hewes

Originally from Princeton, New Jersey, Joseph Hewes established a successful shipping business in Wilmington, North Carolina. By the time of the Continental Congress, Hewes has amassed a fortune through his shipping business. Since 1766 he has served in his colonies Provincial Assembly and then the Committee of Correspondence. Unlike Hooper, Hewes was not a brilliant orator but was very useful in committees. In Congress he is a tireless worker who mainly concerns himself with maritime matters.

William Hooper

William Hooper is a successful lawyer in North Carolina originally from Massachusetts. He served in colonial government positions under British leaders but the formal start of his political career was in 1773 when he served in the Provincial Congress Assembly. Hooper in April 1774
predicted that the colonies would soon become independent of Great Britain, but coming to the Congress he stands loyal to the crown and looking to address the colonial grievances.

**Province of New Hampshire**

New Hampshire has just recently began to experience the political constraints of Parliament and revolutionary sentiment is rising. Clashes between the Provincial Legislature and the Royal Governor of New Hampshire made the Governor shut down the Committee of Correspondence. However, this committee still operates secretly through the legislature.

**Josiah Bartlett**

Josiah Bartlett studied medicine and is a practicing physician in New Hampshire. As a member of the colonial legislature, Bartlett was an active legislature and did not let influence of the Royal Governors detract from his efforts to advocate against British oppression. Bartlett also served as a militia commander in 1775 just before attending the Congress. Bartlett is an active patriot against British influence, as can be seen in he is the leaders of the New Hampshire’s Committee of Correspondence.

**William Whipple**

William Whipple amassed an early fortune by being an adequate sailor. At the age of twenty-nine, he partnered with his brother and started a successful merchant business. Whipple became involved in the patriotic movement, serving in New Hampshire’s provincial congress in 1775 and now serves in the Continental Congress. Much like in 1764 when he worked to prevent the importation of tea from Britain, Whipple still opposes Parliament’s authority in the colonies.

**John Langdon**

John Langdon was an avid supporter of the patriotic movement and opposition to recent British actions. He was a successful and established in the mercantile business in New Hampshire. He served on New Hampshire’s Committee of Correspondence, nonimportation committee, and participated in the seizing of British munitions from Portsmouth fort. In 1775, before attending the Congress, Langdon served as speaker of the New Hampshire assembly.

**New Jersey**

New Jersey stands similar to its bordering Middle Colonies. Jersey was founded primarily for trade and currently ships a lot of agricultural products, primarily wheat, to Great Britain. The colony is not dominated by any religion which has created a large array of religious communities including Quakers, Catholics, Lutherans, and Jews. While wanting influence on their own politics, New Jersey and its colonists do not currently see any reason to break from Great Britain.

**John Witherspoon**
John Witherspoon was born in Gifford, Scotland and received the high education in Great Britain and was a Presbyterian Minister. In 1768, Witherspoon immigrated to the colonies to serve as the first President at the College of New Jersey (later renamed Princeton University). Witherspoon became very popular through his success with the college and began writing essays on subjects but for the most part abstained from writing about political issues. Witherspoon currently still holds his Presidential position but is a late addition to the Congress in Philadelphia. Witherspoon’s patriotism includes a commencement speech at Princeton supporting student resistance to Britain and pushing for the imprisonment of the New Jersey Royal Governor.

John Hart

John Hart was a farmer from New Jersey as he inherited the farmland that his father had established. Hart holds a long resume of political involvement beginning in 1761 being elected to the New Jersey assembly. Despite not attending the First Continental Congress, he did attend the New Jersey convention which voted on those delegates. He served on the Provincial assembly for ten years and in 1775 was appointed to the local Committee of Safety, Committee of Correspondence, and a judge on the common Court of Pleas.

Stephen Crane

Stephen Crane was heavily involved in New Jersey politics. He served in the New Jersey Provincial Congress, New Jersey General Assembly, and New Jersey Legislative Council. Crane’s highest positions include Speaker of the General Assembly in 1771 and the mayor of his hometown, Elizabethtown, before serving in the Continental Congress. Crane, who is at the age of 66, represents part of the delegation which opposes separation from Great Britain.

New York

New York sent delegates to the first continental Congress with instructions to actively pursue a resolution with Britain. Coming into the Second Continental Congress, the New York Provincial Assembly is stalled on what relationship it wants with Great Britain. There is no sign of rise in patriotic sentiment in the colony but with the Provincial Assembly not giving instructions to the New York delegates, New York has abstained on more issues than any other colony in the Congress.

Phillip Livingston

Phillip Livingston comes from a family with long Scottish ancestry and a very prominent and wealthy family in New York. Livingston was a successful merchant and also avid philanthropist. His political background includes attending the Colonial Convention in Albany in 1754. Livingston has to juggle his position in the Continental Congress with his Presidency of the New York Provincial Assembly, which currently is unsure of its opinion of Parliament’s rule.

Francis Lewis
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Originally from Wales, Francis Lewis originally entered a mercantile house in London. In 1734, he moved to New York to set up a mercantile business. In 1756, he was taken prisoner and shipped to France while working as a British mercantile agent. Upon returning to the colonies, he became active in politics eventually being elected to the Continental Congress in 1775. Lewis signed the Olive Branch petition and while did not speak often in the Congress, was known as a detail oriented and diligent working committee member.

Lewis Morris

Lewis Morris was born in New York to a family from which he inherited a large fortune. After the passing of his father, Morris left his father’s farm and became active in politics. He served in New York’s Provincial Legislature and later rallied local representatives to re-establish the legislature in 1775. Morris primary concerns in the Congress are with the Continental Army, protection of New York, and issues with Native Americans.

Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania’s largest city, Philadelphia, is host to the Continental Congress. Despite housing the most organized anti-British Congress, Pennsylvania is a state still in support of reconciliation. Despite growing patriotic sentiment, Pennsylvania still remains torn over the colony’s relationship with Britain and it appears that many would side with John Dickinson in pursuing reconciliation.

Benjamin Franklin

Benjamin Franklin is in every way a Renaissance man. Not receiving a formal education past the age of ten, Franklin has created a successful printing practice with the Pennsylvania Gazette. Franklin has also been a local politician, inventor, and a representative to France, England, and other European colonies. He is well known both in the colonies and in Europe and after not attending the first Congress is a strong addition to the Second Continental Congress.

John Dickinson

John Dickinson is arguably the most experienced and dedicated politicians of the Continental Congress. He joined the Pennsylvania assembly in 1764, served in the Stamp Act Congress in 1765, and wrote multiple essays and letters that received colonial and European attention, specifically Letter of a Pennsylvania Farmer. Dickinson helped write declarations of the first and second continental congress, carefully keeping a cool temper in the tone of the Congress’s declaration as he hoped to maintain a chance of reconciliation with the British crown.

James Wilson

James Wilson, born in Scotland, came to the colonies in 1766 and began as a teacher. He then turned to the profession of law and after studying at the offices of John Dickinson he set up his
own practice. In 1774, Wilson was elected a member of a Committee of Correspondence and wrote *Considerations on the Nature and Extent of the Legislative Authority of the British Parliament*. Wilson in the Continental Congress is one of the most radical members and supporters of independence, but he refuses to vote on anything that would contradict the opinions of his constituents.

**Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations**

The Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation is one of only three of the thirteen colonies to be a Charter Colony. The Charter Colony is primarily self-governed instead of a Royal Colony which is ruled directly by the British Crown. While this has allowed for greater independence in rule, the actions being taken by the crown against Massachusetts, another Charter Colony, alarm the colonists that the rights of chartered colonies may not last.

**Stephen Hopkins**

Stephen Hopkins was born in 1707 in Rhode Island. The self-educated man was a member and later speaker of the Rhode Island Assembly and attended the Albany Convention in New York in 1754. Hopkins also served multiple year terms as Governor of Rhode Island, constantly competing with political rival Samuel Ward. Hopkins has a long history, even before the idea of revolution surfaced, of speaking out against British tyranny.

**William Ellery**

William Ellery is a Rhode Island native who had multiple professions before establishing himself in law at the age of forty three. Before settling on the profession of law, Ellery was a merchant, customs official, and a clerk of the Rhode Island General Assembly. William Ellery was also an active member in the Rhode Island Sons of Liberty before joining the Continental Congress. Ellery believes that independence from Britain is a viable option and that the colonies are capable of governing themselves.

**Samuel Ward**

Samuel Ward was the son of a previous Rhode Island governor Richard Ward. Ward was a career politician and rose to the head of the political faction that opposed one headed by Stephen Hopkins. Both men constantly traded off the position of Governor of the Colony. As Governor in 1766, Ward was the only colonial governor to sign the Stamp Act which forfeited his position. He would later reconcile with Hopkins over the common hatred of British action.

**South Carolina**

South Carolina is a well off slave owning colony that has not been pestered by the British. However, the colony has dealt with both slave revolts and indian raids in the recent past. Since its founding, South Carolina has established and maintained a local government body. Despite that, the colony sends its
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delegation to the Continental Congress encouraging the delegates to pursue reconciliation and deter efforts that would push toward independence.

Edward Rutledge

Edward Rutledge was born to an aristocratic family in South Carolina. He received his education from Oxford and passed the English bar. Rutledge enters the Second Continental Congress being the age of twenty seven. Despite being brought in through the influence of his father and brother, Rutledge has gained a lot of influence over the South Carolina delegation and is well spoken in the Congress. Rutledge actions represent the opinion of his colony on the topic of independence.

Christopher Gadsden

Christopher Gadsden started as a soldier and a merchant. He proposed through his mercantile business in South Carolina and built the wharf in Charleston which is named after him. He served as a militia captain in the French and Indian War and led expeditions against the Cherokee. In 1757 he began to oppose British rule, later participating in the Stamp Act Congress and being a founder and leader of the South Carolina Sons of Liberty.

Arthur Middleton

Arthur Middleton benefitted from a father that covered his travels and overseas education in Britain. After receiving an education at Cambridge, he returned to South Carolina and eventually became involved in colonial politics. In 1775, Middleton served on the Council of Safety at Charleston which covertly organized Charleston into an effective defensive position. Middleton’s first loyalty is to South Carolina as opposed to the thirteen colonies.

The Commonwealth of Virginia

Virginia is the oldest and most influential of the thirteen colonies. Actions from this Southern colony can have influence on other Southern colonies. This is a large reason why George Washington, a Virginian, was given command of the Continental army as is united the Southern region to the conflict in the Northeast. Being economically both a Southern and Middle colony, the support of Virginia seems almost necessary to bring an overwhelming support on any issue.

Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson, along with Franklin, is the second Renaissance man that was added to the Second Continental Congress. Jefferson, a practicing lawyer, fluent in five languages, educated in classics, and a Virginian politician served in the House of Burgesses starting in 1769. Jefferson is characterized as quiet and reserved but an elegant and excellent writer. His document, A Summary View of the Rights of British America shows his ability to convey opinions on the colonial relationship with Britain through written documents. In this pamphlet, Jefferson asserted that Parliament and King George III did not have authority over the colonies.
Richard Henry Lee

Richard Henry Lee was born into a successful and well off aristocratic family in Virginia. Lee served as commander of a local militia in the French and Indian War. Following the war he served in the Virginia House of Burgesses and continued to meet in secret with other members even after the British dissolved the political body. From the First Continental Congress, Lee still holds many high committee appointments and is known as an excellent orator.

Patrick Henry

Patrick Henry, originally intended to be a farmer by his family, failed in farming, academia, and business before passing the bar and beginning to practice law. Henry would be voted into the House of Burgesses and soon after become the most radical member of the body. Beginning with his Stamp Act resolutions, Henry gained the reputation as an extreme radical against British rule and a loud orator. His reputation is the only one that competes with the radicalism of Sam Adams.
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