



Faith of Our Fathers

The last statement in the Declaration of Independence concludes with this pledge: *“For the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the Protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”*

This was a prophetic statement.

Fifty-six men signed the Declaration of Independence. They came from all walks of life. Twenty-three were lawyers, twelve were merchants, twelve were men of the soil, four were physicians, two were manufacturers, one was a politician, one a printer and another a minister.

Almost a third of the signers were under forty years of age; eighteen were in their thirties and three in their twenties. Only seven were over sixty. The youngest, Edward Rutledge of South Carolina, was twenty-six and a half, and the oldest,

Benjamin Franklin, was seventy. Three of the signers lived to be over ninety. Charles Carroll died at age ninety-five. Ten died in their eighties.

The signers were religious men, all being Protestant except Charles Carroll, who was Roman Catholic.

Over half expressed their religious faith as being Episcopalian.

Others were Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist.

These signers pledged their lives, and some paid that price for this nation’s birth—and our birthright.

At least nine of them died as a result of the war or its hardships on them.



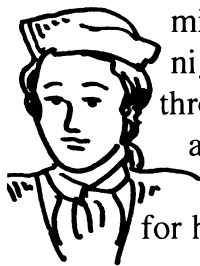
The first of the signers to die was **John Morton** of Pennsylvania. He was at first

John Morton sympathetic to the British, but finally changed his mind and cast his vote for independence. By doing so, his friends, relatives, and neighbors turned against him. Those who knew him best said this ostracism



hastened his death, for he lived only eight months after signing the Declaration of Independence. His last words were, “. . . *tell them that they will live to see the hour when they shall acknowledge it to have been the most glorious service that I ever rendered to my country.*”

Another to pay with his life was **Caesar Rodney**. Suffering facial cancer, he left his sickbed at



midnight and rode all night by horseback through a severe storm to arrive just in time to cast the deciding vote for his delegation in favor of independence.

Caesar Rodney

His doctors told him he needed treatment obtainable only in Europe. He refused to go in this time of his country’s crisis. That decision cost him his life.

When the British came to Trenton, they settled near the home of **John Hart**, one of the five signers from New Jersey. He had a large farm and several grist mills. While his wife was on her deathbed, Hessian [German] soldiers descended on Hart’s property. They destroyed his mills, ravaged his property, and scattered his thirteen children. Hart became a hunted fugitive eluding capture by sleeping in caves and the

forest. When he finally returned to his land, he was broken in health, his farmland was scoured, his wife had died, and his children were all scattered. His failing health forced him to leave the New Jersey Legislature in 1779, and he died less than three years after the Declaration was signed.

Yes, the signers also pledged their fortunes, and at least fifteen saw the realization of that pledge. Twelve had their homes ransacked or ruined. Six literally gave their fortunes to further the cause. When the four New York delegates signed the declaration, they signed away their property.

William Floyd’s estate in New York was overrun and ruined by the British. He was exiled from his home for seven years and



practically ruined **William Floyd** financially. He was unable to return home until after the war.



Francis Hopkinson

Francis Hopkinson’s home was ransacked twice.



Francis Lewis had his home plundered and burned, and his wife was carried away prisoner. She suffered great brutality and never regained her health; she died within two years. Lewis never regained his fortune.



Francis Lewis

Robert Morris issued over a million dollars of personal credit to finance the war effort, and raised \$2,000,000 to defeat the British at Yorktown. In 1798, his personal finances collapsed and was never reimbursed by the country. He spent three years in debtors prison, had his property destroyed and lost 150 ships during the war.



Robert Morris

Phillip Livingston's 150,000 acre estate was seized by the British, but he continued to contribute his dwindling fortune to Congress for the war effort. The strain of the revolutionary struggle also depleted his health and he died less than two years after signing the Declaration of Independence.



Phillip Livingston

Thomas Heyward served in the army and was taken prisoner. The British raided his plantation while he was in prison and burned his buildings. His wife became ill and died before he was released.

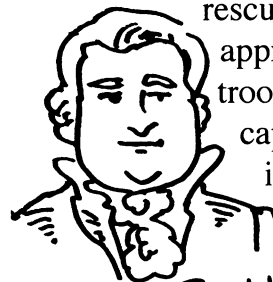
Edward Rutledge was taken prisoner by the British and imprisoned for ten months.



Edward Rutledge

Lewis Morris' Westchester estate was ransacked by the British and nearly 1,000 acres were burned. His home was destroyed, his cattle butchered, and his family driven from their home. **Joseph Hewes** of North Carolina gave tirelessly of himself to create a Navy and help General Washington. Working long hours without adequate food and rest, he lost his health and died at the age of 49.

Richard Stockton rushed home to Princeton, New Jersey, in 1776, to rescue his family from approaching British troops. He was captured and thrown into prison, where he was repeatedly beaten and kept near starvation. The British also destroyed his home and burned



Richard Stockton



his papers. As a result of mistreatment, he became an invalid and died in 1781.

Abraham Clark had two sons in the Continental Army, both of whom received harsh treatment from the

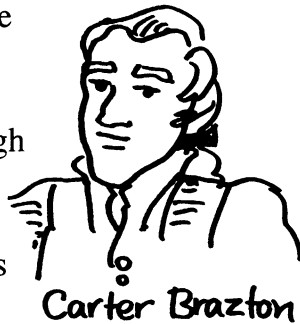


British after they were captured. **George Clymer's** home in Chester was taken over by the

British and he lost more than 100 of his ships during the war.

William Ellery's Newport home was burned during the invasion of Rhode Island. **William Williams** of Connecticut sacrificed his fortune for the cause, financing a number of enterprises, including the Ticonderoga offensive.

Carter Brazton saw virtually every merchant ship he owned sunk or captured by the British. Although he lost his wealth and was forced to sell his land, he continued to serve in the Virginia Legislature.

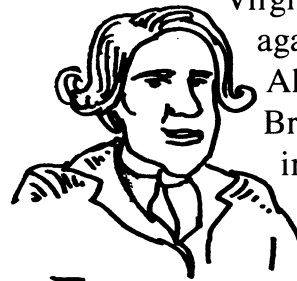


Lyman Hall of Georgia, had his rice plantation destroyed by the British. **George Walton** also of Georgia, was wounded and captured.

Arthur Middleton of South Carolina was captured and imprisoned after the British ravaged his plantation.

William Hooper of North Carolina was hunted by the British. He fled, and they burned his home and lands.

Thomas Nelson, Jr., of Virginia died in poverty at age fifty-one. He served as Governor of Virginia and distributed large sums of his money to the families of his soldiers. At the Battle of Yorktown, he led 3,000



Virginia militia against the British. Although the British took refuge in homes belonging to Virginians, **Thomas Nelson Jr.** Nelson's troops shelled them anyway. During one engagement, Nelson turned a cannon on his own home and lit the fuse, killing the two British officers inside. He gave his fortune to help finance the war and never regained either it or his health.

Again it is interesting to note that before Patrick Henry gave his great

