



The Founding Fathers

Presented by The Westlake 9/12 Project

- *“Freedom can exist only in the society of knowledge. Without learning, men are incapable of knowing their rights, and where learning is confined to a few people, liberty can be neither equal nor universal.” ~ Benjamin Rush, 1786*
- *“Posterity, you will never know how much it cost the present generation to preserve your freedom. I hope you will make good use of it. If you do not, I shall repent in heaven that ever I took half the pains to preserve it.” ~ John Adams*

OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE

- Who were the “Founding Fathers”?
- What contribution did they make?
- What set them apart from everybody else?
- Why should we learn more about them?
- How can we encourage a better understanding of their contributions and impact on our present society?

WHO WERE THEY?

- The Founding Fathers of the United States, or simply the Founding Fathers, were a group of American leaders who united the Thirteen Colonies, led the war for independence from Great Britain, and built a framework of government for the new United States of America, built upon republican principles, during the latter decades of the 18th century.

WHO WERE THEY?

- The group was composed of businessmen, lawyers, philosophers, politicians, plantation owners and writers.
- They came from a variety of social, economic, and ethnic backgrounds.
- The Founding Fathers came from a variety of occupations, and many (such as John Adams, a lawyer; Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a planter; and Benjamin Rush, a doctor) had no prior political experience.

WHO WERE THEY?

- There are considered to be four documents that were critical to the formation of the United States of America;
 - The Continental Association
 - The Declaration of Independence
 - The Articles of Confederation
 - The US Constitution
- All together, there were a total of 149 individuals who signed one or more of these documents, and as such might be considered to be part of the Founding Fathers.

WHO WERE THEY?

- While the list of Founding Fathers varies by author, the following group is generally considered to be the list of key people;
- John Adams; Samuel Adams; Benjamin Franklin; Alexander Hamilton; Patrick Henry; John Jay; Thomas Jefferson; James Madison; John Marshall; George Mason; Gouverneur Morris; Thomas Paine; George Washington

JOHN ADAMS

- John Adams was an important figure in both the First and Second Continental Congresses.
- He was on the committee to draft the Declaration of Independence and was central to its adoption.
- Because of his foresight, George Washington was named Commander of the Continental Army at the Second Continental Congress.
- He was chosen to help negotiate the Treaty of Paris that officially ended the American Revolution.
- He later became the first vice president and then the second president of the United States.

SAMUEL ADAMS

- Samuel Adams was a true revolutionary. He was one of the founders of the Sons of Liberty.
- His leadership helped organize the Boston Tea Party.
- He was a delegate to both the First and Second Continental Congresses and fought for the Declaration of Independence. He also helped draft the Articles of Confederation.
- He helped write the Massachusetts Constitution and became its governor.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

- Benjamin Franklin was considered the elder statesman by the time of the Revolution and later Constitutional Convention.
- He was a delegate to the Second Continental Congress.
- He was part of the Committee of Five that was to draft the Declaration of Independence and made corrections that Jefferson included in his final draft.
- Franklin was central to getting French aid during the American Revolution. He also helped with negotiating the Treaty of Paris that ended the war.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

- Hamilton fought in the Revolutionary War. However, his true importance came about after the war when he was a huge proponent for the US Constitution.
- He, along with John Jay and James Madison, wrote the Federalist Papers in an effort to secure support for the document.
- Once Washington was elected as the first president, Hamilton was made the first Secretary of the Treasury. His plan for getting the new country on its feet economically was instrumental in forming a sound financial basis for the new republic.

PATRICK HENRY

- Patrick Henry was a radical revolutionary who was unafraid to speak up against Great Britain at an early date.
- He is most famous for his speech which includes the line, "Give me liberty or give me death."
- He was a governor of Virginia during the Revolution.
- He also helped fight for the addition of the Bill of Rights to the US Constitution, a document with which he disagreed because of its strong federal powers.

JOHN JAY

- John Jay was an American statesman, patriot, diplomat, Founding Father of the United States, abolitionist, negotiator and signatory of the Treaty of Paris of 1783, second Governor of New York, and the first Chief Justice of the United States (1789–1795).
- He directed U.S. foreign policy for much of the 1780s and was an important leader of the Federalist Party after the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1788.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

- Thomas Jefferson, as a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, was chosen to be part of a Committee of Five that would draft the Declaration of Independence.
- He was unanimously picked to write the Declaration.
- He was then sent to France as a diplomat after the Revolution and then returned to become first the vice president under John Adams and then the third president.

JAMES MADISON

- James Madison was known as the Father of the Constitution, for he was responsible for writing much of it.
- Further, with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, he was one of the authors of the Federalist Papers that helped persuade the states to accept the new Constitution.
- He was responsible for drafting the Bill of Rights that were added to the Constitution in 1791.
- He helped organize the new government and later became the fourth president of the United States.

JOHN MARSHALL

- John James Marshall was an American politician and lawyer who served as the fourth Chief Justice of the United States from 1801 to 1835.
- Marshall favored the ratification of the United States Constitution, and he played a major role in Virginia's ratification of that document.
- Marshall remains the longest-serving chief justice and fourth-longest serving justice in Supreme Court history, and he is widely regarded as one of the most influential justices to ever sit on the Supreme Court.
- Prior to joining the Supreme Court, Marshall served as the United States Secretary of State under President John Adams.

GEORGE MASON

- George Mason IV was an American planter, politician and delegate to the U.S. Constitutional Convention of 1787, one of three delegates who refused to sign the Constitution.
- His writings, including substantial portions of the Fairfax Resolves of 1774, the Virginia Declaration of Rights of 1776, and his Objections to this Constitution of Government (1787) opposing ratification, have exercised a significant influence on American political thought and events.
- The Virginia Declaration of Rights, which Mason principally authored, served as a basis for the United States Bill of Rights, of which he has been deemed the father.

GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

- Gouverneur Morris was an accomplished statesman that ushered in the idea of a person being a citizen of the union, not the individual states.
- He was part of the Second Continental Congress and as such helped provide legislative leadership to back up George Washington in his fight against the British.
- He signed the Articles of Confederation.
- He is credited with writing parts of the Constitution including possibly its preamble.

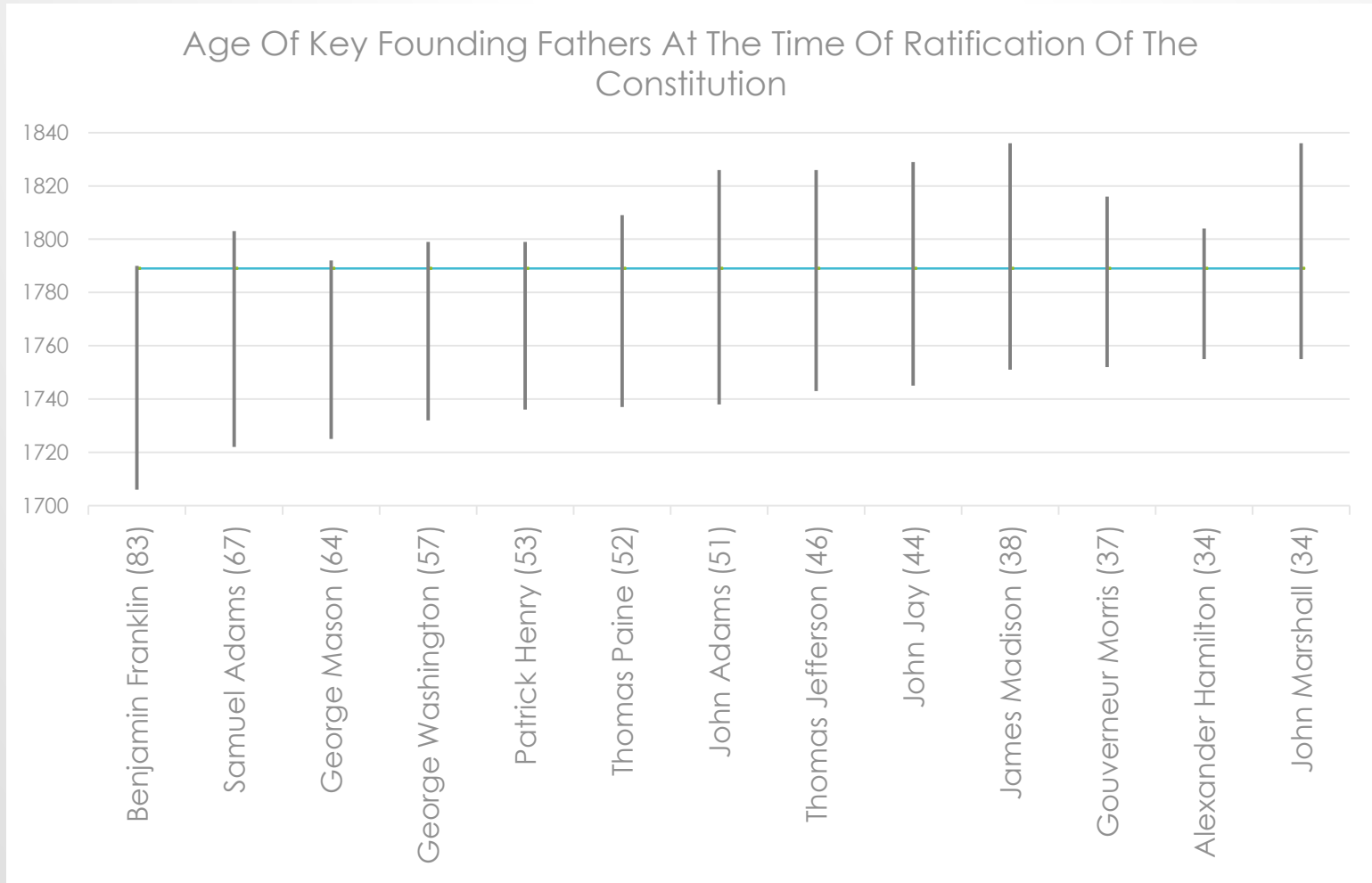
THOMAS PAINE

- Thomas Paine was the author of a very important pamphlet called Common Sense that was published in 1776. He wrote a compelling argument for independence from Great Britain. His pamphlet convinced many colonists and founding fathers of the wisdom of open rebellion against the British if necessary.
- Further, he published another pamphlet called The Crisis during the Revolutionary War that helped spur on the soldiers to fight.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

- George Washington was a member of the First Continental Congress.
- He was then chosen to lead the Continental Army.
- He was the president of the Constitutional Convention and of course became the first president of the United States.
- In all these leadership positions, he showed a steadfastness of purpose and helped create the precedents and foundations that would form America.

HOW OLD WERE THEY?



CONTRIBUTIONS

- A discussion about the Founding Fathers occupies a special place in America's history that has no parallel in the history of any European nation-state.
- The United States was not founded on a common ethnicity, language, or religion that could be taken for granted as the primal source of national identity. Instead, it was founded on a set of beliefs and convictions, what Thomas Jefferson described as self-evident truths, that were proclaimed in 1776 and then embedded in the Bill of Rights of the Constitution.

CONTRIBUTIONS

- To become an American citizen is not a matter of bloodlines or genealogy but rather a matter of endorsing and embracing the values established at the founding, which accords the men who invented these values a special significance.
- The American system of jurisprudence links all landmark constitutional decisions to the language of the Constitution itself and often to the “original intent” of the framers.
- This legal tradition gives the American Founders an abiding relevance in current discussions of policy that would be inconceivable in most other countries.

CONTRIBUTIONS

- The Founding Fathers created the first modern nation-state based on liberal principles, including;
 - That political sovereignty in any government resides in the citizenry rather than in a divinely sanctioned monarchy;
 - That economic productivity depends upon the release of individual energies in the marketplace rather than on state-sponsored policies;
 - That the individual, not the society or the state, is the sovereign unit in the political equation;
 - That all citizens are equal before the law.

CONTRIBUTIONS

- The Founding Fathers managed to defy conventional wisdom in four unprecedented achievements;
 - They won a war for colonial independence against the most powerful military and economic power in the world;
 - They established the first large-scale republic in the modern world;
 - They invented political parties that institutionalized the concept of a legitimate opposition;
 - They established the principle of the legal separation of church and state, in that the state could not dictate religion, nor deny its free exercise.

CONTRIBUTIONS

- Finally, all these achievements were won without recourse to the violent purges that accompanied subsequent revolutions in France, Russia, and China.
- This was the overarching accomplishment that the British philosopher Alfred Lord North Whitehead had in mind when he observed that there were only two instances in the history of Western civilization when the political elite of an emerging empire behaved as well as one could reasonably expect: the first was Rome under Augustus, and the second was the United States under the Founding Fathers.

HOW WERE THEY DIFFERENT?

- How did this backwoods province on the western rim of the Atlantic world, far removed from the epicenters of learning and culture in London and Paris, somehow produce thinkers and ideas that transformed the landscape of modern politics?
- Two historical explanations have been offered, each focusing on the special conditions present in Revolutionary America favorable to the creation of leadership.
- The first explanation describes the founding era as a unique moment that was “*postaristocratic*” and “*predemocratic*.”

HOW WERE THEY DIFFERENT?

- Postaristocratic;
- American society was more open to talent than England or the rest of Europe, where hereditary bloodlines were essential credentials for entry into public life.
- The Founders comprised what Jefferson called “a natural aristocracy,” meaning a political elite based on merit rather than genealogy, thus permitting men of impoverished origins such as Alexander Hamilton and Benjamin Franklin, who would have languished in obscurity in London, to reach the top tier.

HOW WERE THEY DIFFERENT?

- Predemocratic;
- The Founders were a self-conscious elite unburdened by egalitarian assumptions.
- Their constituency was not “the people” but “the public,” which they regarded as the long-term interest of the citizenry that they—the Founders—had been chosen to divine.
- Living between the assumptions of an aristocratic and a democratic world without belonging fully to either, the Founders maximized the advantages of both.

HOW WERE THEY DIFFERENT?

- The second explanation focuses on the crisis-driven pressures that forced latent talent to the surface.
- When Jefferson concluded the Declaration of Independence by proclaiming that all the signers of the document were wagering “our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor” on the cause, he was engaging in more than a rhetorical flourish.
- For example, when Washington departed Mount Vernon for Philadelphia in May 1775, he presumed that the British would burn his estate to the ground once war was declared..

HOW WERE THEY DIFFERENT?

- An analogous gamble was required in 1787–88 to endorse the unprecedented viability of a large-scale American republic.
- The founding era was an all-or-nothing moment in which only those blessed with uncommon conviction about the direction in which history was headed could survive the test.
- The severe and unforgiving political gauntlet the Founders were required to run eliminated lukewarm patriots and selected for survival only those leaders with the hard residue of unalloyed resolve.

WHY LEARN MORE ABOUT THEM?

- The ideological and even temperamental diversity within the founders gave the American founding a distinctly argumentative flavor that made all convictions, no matter how cherished, subject to abiding scrutiny that, like history itself, became an argument without end.
- The enshrinement of argument created a permanent collision of ideas and interests that generates a dynamic and wholly modern version of political stability.
- Understanding greatness enables us to appreciate and imitate it.

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Connecticut
 - Oliver Ellsworth*
 - William Samuel Johnson
 - Roger Sherman
- Delaware
 - Richard Bassett
 - Gunning Bedford, Jr.
 - Jacob Broom
 - John Dickinson
 - George Read
- Georgia
 - Abraham Baldwin
 - William Few

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Georgia
 - William Houston*
 - William L. Pierce*
- Maryland
 - Daniel Carroll
 - Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer
 - Luther Martin*
 - James McHenry
 - John F. Mercer*
- Massachusetts
 - Elbridge Gerry*
 - Nathaniel Gorham

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Massachusetts
 - Rufus King
 - Caleb Strong*
- New Hampshire
 - Nicholas Gilman
 - John Langdon
- New Jersey
 - David Brearly
 - Jonathan Dayton
 - William C. Houston*
 - William Livingston
 - William Paterson

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- New York
 - Alexander Hamilton
 - John Lansing, Jr.*
 - Robert Yates*
- North Carolina
 - William. Blount
 - William R. Davie*
 - Alexander Martin*
 - Richard. Dobbs Spaight
 - Hugh Williamson

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- Pennsylvania
 - George Clymer
 - Thomas Fitzsimons
 - Benjamin Franklin
 - Jared Ingersoll
 - Thomas Mifflin
 - Gouverneur Morris
 - Robert Morris
 - James Wilson
- Rhode Island
 - Rhode Island did not send any delegates to the Constitutional Convention.

FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION

- South Carolina
 - Pierce Butler
 - Charles Pinckney
 - Charles Cotesworth Pinckney
 - John Rutledge
- Virginia
 - John Blair
 - James Madison Jr.
 - George Mason*
 - James McClurg*
 - Edmund J. Randolph*
 - **George Washington**
 - George Wythe*

WHAT NEXT?

- In the future, we will explore in more depth the lives and contributions of various members of the Founding Fathers and how they have helped to formulate our country.

RESOURCES

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