

Declaration of Independence - Signers Series

William Whipple - New Hampshire

William Whipple was born on January 14, 1730 in Kittery, Massachusetts (now Maine) into a seafaring family. With but a common school education, he went to sea, and became a ship captain when he was 21. After amassing a small fortune, in 1759, he left his captaincy and opened a mercantile firm in Portsmouth with his brother. Being an early believer in the colonial cause, he was elected to the Provincial legislative in 1775, and to the Continental Congress in January 1776. Later that month, he wrote the following to his friend Josiah Bartlett, "Nothing less than the fate of America depends on the virtue of her sons, and if they do not have virtue enough to support the most Glorious Cause ever human beings were engaged in, they don't deserve the blessings of freedom."

On July 2nd, he voted for the Declaration of Independence, and signed it on August 2nd, right after Dr. Bartlett. In 1777, he was appointed Brigadier General in the New Hampshire Militia, charged with calling out and equipping troops for the campaign against General Burgoyne. He led his four regiments in the battles at Stillwater and Saratoga, and was one of the commissioners who arranged the terms for Burgoyne's surrender.

Before the battle of Saratoga, his long-time slave and body guard, Prince, challenged Whipple with "You are going to fight for your liberty but I have none to fight for". After some thought, Whipple committed to free Prince at the end of the war as long as Prince continued his military service. Prince was freed on February 22, 1781. William Whipple believed strongly that all people should have "the blessings of Freedom."

In 1782, he was appointed as one of the commissioners to settle the dispute between Pennsylvania and Connecticut concerning Connecticut's claim to the Wyoming section along the northern portion of Pennsylvania. It was logically resolved in favor of Pennsylvania.

His last public service was as an associate justice of the New Hampshire Superior Court, which he held for the last three years of his life. Whipple passed at home in his chambers on November 28, 1785.



Wm Whipple