

Declaration of Independence - Signers Series

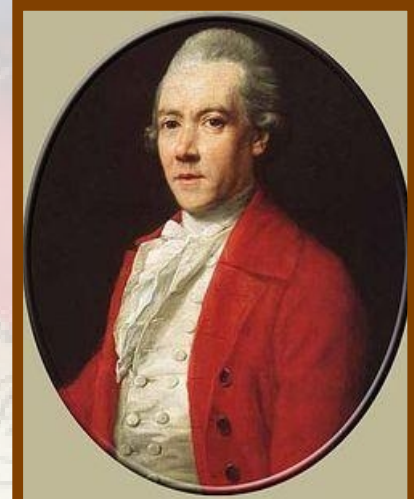
Philip Livingston - New York

Philip Livingston was born at Albany, on the fifteenth of January, 1716. After completing a preparative course of study, he entered Yale College, at New Haven, where he graduated with distinguished honors in 1737. He turned his attention to commercial pursuits, and engaged in an extensive and lucrative business in the city of New York, where his integrity and upright dealings won for him the profound respect of the whole community.

Mr. Livingston first entered public life in 1754, when he was elected an Alderman of the East Ward of the city of New York. For nine consecutive years he was re-elected to that office, and always gave entire satisfaction to his constituents.

When Sir Charles Hardy, the Governor of the Colony of New York, was appointed a rear-admiral in the British navy, the government devolved upon the Lieutenant Governor, Delancey, who at once dissolved the General Assembly and ordered new elections. These contests at that time were very heated, but the superior education and influence of the Livingston family secured Philip and his brother Robert, seats in that body. Mr. Livingston soon became a leader among his colleagues, and by his superior wisdom and insight, measures were set in motion which resulted in the capture from the French of several important frontier fortresses, and finally the subjugation of Canada.

He was very influential in that body, and took a decided stand against the unrighteous acts of Great Britain. He was the associate and leader of such men as General Schuyler, Pierre Van Cortlandt and Charles DeWitt. As long as whig principles held the Provincial Assembly, he was the Speaker of the House. When toryism took possession of the province, he left the Assembly.



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In 1774, Mr. Livingston was elected a delegate to the first Continental Congress, and was on the committee that prepared the address to the people of Great Britain; an address replete with bold and original thoughts, plain propositions and convincing arguments. The next year the Assembly presented such an array of tories that it was impossible to elect delegates to the second Congress. Accordingly, several counties of New York sent delegates to a Provincial Convention, which body elected delegates to the General Congress. Among those were Philip Livingston, and his nephew, Robert R. Livingston. These delegates were vested with power to act as circumstances should require.

Mr. Livingston warmly supported the proposition for Independence, and he voted for and signed the Declaration of Independence. This was sanctioned by the Provincial Assembly of New York. When the State governments were formed, after the Declaration of Independence, Mr. Livingston was elected a member of the first Senate of New York, which met on the tenth of September, 1777.

In 1778, although his health was in a fragile state, suffering from heart disease, he obeyed the calls of duty, and took his seat in Congress, to which he had been elected. He had a premonition that he should not return to his family, and accordingly on his departure, he bade his family and friends a final adieu. On the twelfth of June 1778, his premonition became a reality, and his disease then suddenly terminated his life, at the age of sixty-two years. No relative was near, except his son Henry, a young man of eighteen years, then residing with the family of General Washington.

