

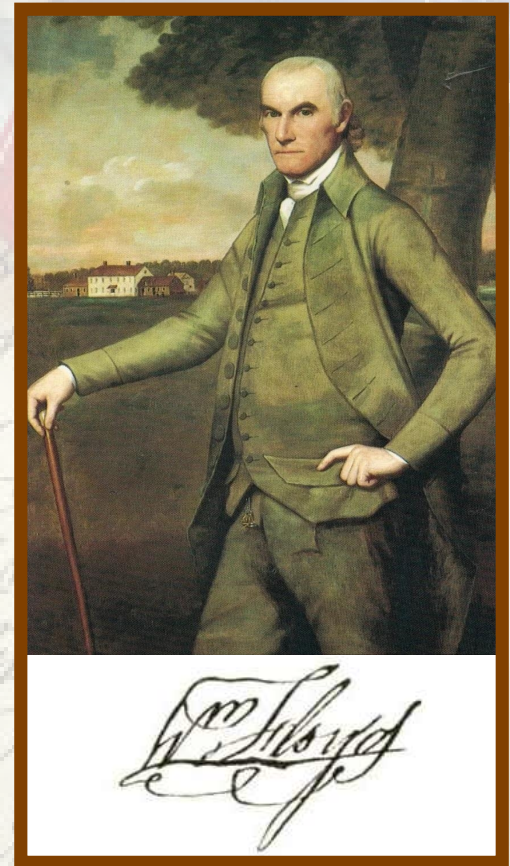
Declaration of Independence - Signers Series

William Floyd - New York

The fourth delegate to sign the Declaration of Independence and the first for the New York Colony. William Floyd, the eldest son of Nicoll and Tabethia Floyd, was born on December 17, 1734 at the Old Mastic House, a huge farming estate of 4400 acres in Brookhaven, Suffolk County, New York. His formal education was mostly a practical one, rather than a scholarly one, since he was brought up to manage the estate. At age twenty, after his father passed, it was his to run, and that he did with a deft hand. With the help of multiple slaves and indentured servants, he raised a variety of crops including wheat, rye, oats, corn, flax, vegetables, as well as livestock - cattle, pigs and sheep - which he shipped from his own dock on the Atlantic.

His entry into politics was as a trustee for the town of Brookhaven, then as a Provincial Assemblyman in 1769. This was soon followed with a colonel's commission in the Suffolk County Militia a year later. As an outspoken supporter of growing rebellion, he was chosen a delegate to both the First and Second Continental Congresses. Like the other New York delegates, Floyd did not vote for the Declaration of Independence, since the New York Congress did not approve independence until July 9th.

Several weeks after Floyd signed the Declaration on August 2nd, the British overran all of Long Island. Floyd's family fortunately escaped to relatives in Middletown, Connecticut. Then, on October 28, 1776, Connecticut Governor John Trumbull, a family friend, ordered an armed party to cross the Sound and bring back Floyd's possessions. His estate was taken over by the British, in part as stables for their cavalry, and remained in their hands until after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1783. It required major renovations to make it livable again.



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Floyd was elected to the New York State Senate in 1777, and continued in that body until 1788, after which, he was elected to the 1st United States Congress in that latter year.

A few years earlier, in 1784, he had purchased a large tract of land along the Mohawk River near Lake Oneida. With his slaves, indentured servants and black freemen, he cleared much that property and created a well cultivated farm. Ten years later, he conveyed his Long Island estate to his son, and moved upstate to Westerville.

Floyd continued his interest in politics, and in 1795 ran unsuccessfully for Lt. Governor as a Democrat Republican against the Federalist ticket that featured Chief Justice John Jay for Governor. He later helped re-write the New York Constitution in 1801, and then became a State Senator in 1808.

He continued running his farm manor, still having three slaves at the time he died on August 4, 1821. As a point of information, New York abolished slavery in 1827, 21 years before Connecticut.

Williams daughter Mary married Washington's New York spy-master Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, while his younger daughter, Catherine, known as Kitty, married William Samuel Johnson Jr., the son of William Samuel Johnson, who was a Framer of the U.S. Constitution and President of Columbia College.

The marriage thus united two of America's founding families, one tied to the Declaration of Independence, the other to the Constitution.

