

Declaration of Independence - Signers Series

Lewis Morris - New York

Lewis Morris, a wealthy landowner, hailed from Morrisania, New York, where he and his wife, Mary Walton, had ten children. After graduating from Yale College in 1746, he spent much of his time managing his vast property holdings in New York and New Jersey.

He was appointed as a Judge of the Court of Admiralty in 1760, a position he held until 1774. He was elected to the Colonial Assembly of New York in 1769 and a delegate to the Provincial Assembly in 1775. He was elected to the 2nd Continental Congress and began his official tenure on May 15, 1775. He was from an area where merchants were loyal to the King. Given that the King and Parliament enacted excessively restrictive policies on the colonists regarding shipping, he eventually became inclined to support independence. This was due in part due to his attempts to put forward accommodations, being roundly rejected.

The Second Continental Congress reached consensus on July 2, 1776, and adopted the Declaration on July 4, 1776. The New York Assembly voted to support the Continental Congress on July 9, 1776. This agreement was carried over to Philadelphia, where it was signed on July 11, 1776.

The price of this Declaration was high as the British Armada defeated the American Army on August 27, 1776, in the Battle of Long Island. Loss of money, destruction of property, as well as physical harm proved to be extensive.

Following his service in the 2nd Continental Congress, Lewis Morris served in many county and state capacities, including Judge of Westchester County in 1777, Major General in the Westchester County Militia, member of the Committee on Detection of Conspiracies, Senator of New York, and as a member of first Board of Regents of the University of New York (1777-1781 and 1784-1788). He was also a delegate to the State Convention, which led to the ratification of the Federal Constitution in 1788.

Lewis Morris passed away at his beloved Morrisania at age 71, leaving behind a life of service that was both comprehensive and admirable.

