Biographical Gazetteer

The following sketches outline the political careers of the principal Pennsylvania leaders. When known, their political positions are indicated (1) in state politics prior to 1787; (2) on the Constitution in 1787; (3) in national politics after 1787.

BRACKENRIDGE, HUGH H. (1748–1816)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist
Born Scotland; came to Pennsylvania, 1753; graduate College of New Jersey, 1771. Army chaplain in War for Independence. Admitted to practice before state Supreme Court, 1780; moved to Pittsburgh, 1781; helped establish Pittsburgh Gazette, 1786; Westmoreland County assemblyman, 1786–87. Published essays and poems supporting Constitution in Pittsburgh Gazette, 1787–88. Justice of state Supreme Court, 1799–1806.

BRYAN, GEORGE (1731–1791)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist

CHAMBERS, STEPHEN (1750?–1789)
Republican/Federalist

CLYMER, DANIEL (1748–1810)
Republican/Federalist/?
Born Philadelphia; cousin George Clymer; graduate College of New Jersey, 1766; admitted to Chester County bar, 1769; admitted to practice before state Supreme Court, 1770. Lieutenant colonel Pennsylvania regiment, 1776; U.S. deputy commissary general of prisoners, 1777. Moved to Reading, Berks County, 1778; assemblyman, 1782–84, 1786–87.

CLYMER, GEORGE (1739–1813)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

**Dallas, Alexander J. (1759–1817)**  
Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican


**Ewing, John (1732–1802)**  
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican

Born Maryland; graduated College of New Jersey, 1754; pastor First Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, 1759–1802; degree of doctor of divinity Edinburgh University, Scotland, 1773; provost University of Pennsylvania, 1779–1802. Opposed ratification of Constitution, 1787–88; accused of writing “Centinel” essays.

**Findley, William (1741–1821)**  
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican


**Fitzsimons, Thomas (1741–1811)**  
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN (1706–1790)
Constitutionalist/Federalist

(See DAB for his life and career prior to his return to America from France, Sept. 1785.) Claimed as leader by Constitutionalists; nominated for councillor from Philadelphia; elected unanimously, Oct. 1785; president, Supreme Executive Council, 1785–88. Delegate to Constitutional Convention, 1787; delivered conciliatory address at close of Convention which was widely published by Federalists late 1787 and early 1788. Nominated for state Convention by Constitutionalists, but defeated, 1787. Last public act was to sign a petition to Congress encouraging abolition of slavery, 1790.

HUTCHINSON, JAMES (1752–1793)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican


LEWIS, WILLIAM (1751–1819)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist


LLOYD, THOMAS (1756–1827)
Federalist/?


LOGAN, GEORGE (1753–1821)
Republican/Federalist/Democratic-Republican

M’CALMONT, JAMES (1727–1809)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican?

MCKEAN, THOMAS (1734–1817)
Constitutionalist/Federalist/Democratic-Republican
Born Chester County; moved to Delaware, admitted to Delaware bar, 1754; admitted to Chester County bar, 1755; delegate Stamp Act Congress, 1765. Clerk Delaware Assembly, 1757–59; Delaware assemblyman, 1762–79; Assembly speaker, 1772–73, 1776; appointed collector port of New Castle, 1771; delegate Delaware state constitutional convention, 1776; acting president Delaware, Sept.-Nov. 1777. Moved to Philadelphia, 1774. Member Congress from Delaware, 1774–76, 1778–83; signed Declaration of Independence; member committee that drafted Articles of Confederation; president of Congress, July-Nov. 1781. Chief Justice Pennsylvania Supreme Court, 1777–99. Philadelphia delegate state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. Delegate state constitutional convention, supported revision of state constitution, 1789–90. Presidential Elector, 1796; governor, 1799–1808; as governor was “father” of “spoils system” in Pennsylvania; and opposed efforts to call state convention to revise constitution of 1790.

MCLENE, JAMES (1730–1806)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican?

MIFFLIN, THOMAS (1744–1800)
Republican/Federalist/Democratic-Republican?
Born Philadelphia, Quaker parents; graduate College of New Jersey, 1760; formed mercantile partnership with brother, 1765. Opposed Stamp Act, 1765. Member First and Second

MORRIS, GOUVERNEUR (1752–1816)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

MORRIS, ROBERT (1734–1806)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

MUHLENBERG, FREDERICK AUGUSTUS CONRAD (1750–1801)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

NICHOLSON, JOHN (1757–1800)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican/Federalist
Born Wales; came to Cumberland County before 1775. Sergeant Pennsylvania regiment early in War for Independence; clerk chamber of accounts, Continental Board of Treasury, 1778–81.
Appointed state auditor of accounts, 1781; comptroller general, 1782; receiver general of taxes, 1785; escheator general to liquidate estates of those attainted for treason, 1787; resigned all offices, 1794. Opposed Constitution, wrote pamphlet attacking it, 1787; organized petition campaign against legislative confirmation of Constitution after state Convention adjourned; had major role in calling Harrisburg Convention, 1788. Became partner of Robert Morris in land speculation, 1794; went bankrupt and died in debtors’ prison.

OSWALD, ELEAZER (1755–1795)
Republican/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican

Born England; came to America, 1770; settled in New Haven, Connecticut; apprenticed to New York newspaper publisher John Holt; married Holt’s daughter, 1772. Continental Army officer, 1775–79; regiment of Colonel John Lamb, 1777–79. Published Baltimore Maryland Journal with William Goddard, 1779–81. Moved to Philadelphia, established Independent Gazetteer, 1782; opened City Coffee House, 1783. Helped Holt operate Independent Gazette; or the New-York Journal, 1782–84, and Holt’s widow, 1784–87. Supported Constitution, then became opponent late in 1787. Went to England, 1792 and then to France; commissioned colonel in French revolutionary army; sent by French to Ireland in 1793 to see if Irish would rebel against British. Returned to America, Nov. 1793, and became active in Democratic societies of New York and Philadelphia.

PETERS, RICHARD (1744–1828)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

Born Philadelphia; graduate College of Philadelphia, 1761; admitted to Philadelphia bar, 1763. Secretary Continental Board of War, 1776; member Board of War, 1777–81; member Confederation Congress, 1782–83. Philadelphia County assemblyman, 1787–90; Assembly Speaker, 1788–90. Judge, federal district court, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, 1792–1828.

PETRIKIN, WILLIAM (1761?–1821)
Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican

Born Scotland; came to Carlisle, Cumberland County, some time in mid-1780s; tailor, merchant. Arrested and then released for part in Carlisle riot of 26 Dec. 1787; wrote newspaper articles and a pamphlet opposing Constitution, 1788; delegate Harrisburg Convention, 1788; justice of the peace, Cumberland County, 1795. Moved to Bellefonte, Mifflin County(?), Dec. 1795. Appointed justice of the peace of newly-organized Centre County, 1800. County register and recorder, 1809–21; county notary, 1813.

PETTIT, CHARLES (1736–1806)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democrat

Born New Jersey; son of Philadelphia merchant; appointed deputy secretary New Jersey, 1769; admitted to New Jersey bar, 1770; secretary of New Jersey, 1776–78. Assistant quartermaster general Continental Army, 1778–81. Moved to Philadelphia after war; merchant, insurance broker, speculator in national debt. Philadelphia assemblyman, 1784–85; principal author of state funding act, 1785; member Confederation Congress, 1785–87; defeated in election to
state Convention, 1787; opposed Constitution. Delegate Harrisburg Convention, 1788; defeated in election to U.S. House of Representatives, 1788.

**PICKERING, TIMOTHY (1745–1829)**
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

Born Massachusetts; graduate Harvard College, 1763; admitted to Massachusetts bar, 1768; register of deeds Essex County, 1774. Militia colonel, 1775; adjutant general Continental Army, 1777–78; quartermaster general Continental Army, 1780–83. Moved to Pennsylvania, 1787; appointed to help organize Luzerne County. Delegate state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. Delegate state constitutional convention, supported revision of state constitution, 1789–90. U.S. Postmaster General, 1791–94; Secretary of War, 1795; Secretary of State, 1795–1800. Returned to Massachusetts, 1800; U.S. Senator, 1803–11; member Massachusetts Executive Council, 1812–13; member U.S. House of Representatives, 1813–17. Opposed War of 1812; supported establishment of Northern confederacy.

**RUSH, BENJAMIN (1745–1813)**
Republican/Federalist/Democratic-Republican

Born near Philadelphia; educated College of New Jersey; received medical degree, University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Began medical practice in Philadelphia, 1769. Member Continental Congress, 1776–77; signed Declaration of Independence. Appointed surgeon general, Middle Department, 1777; member Republican Society, 1779; helped found Dickinson College at Carlisle, 1782. Delegate to state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787; wrote newspaper articles supporting Constitution and campaigned for revision of state constitution. Member Pennsylvania Democratic Society, 1794. Treasurer of the United State Mint, 1797–1813. Supported movements for prison reform, educational reform, temperance, and abolition of slavery.

**SMILIE, JOHN (1742–1813)**
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican


**SMITH, JONATHAN BAYARD (1742–1812)**
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican

Born Philadelphia; graduate College of New Jersey, 1760; merchant. Member committee of safety, 1775; council of safety, 1777. Member Continental Congress, 1777, but resigned to help defend Philadelphia. Prothonotary Court of Common Pleas of city and county of Philadelphia,

WAYNE, ANTHONY (1745–1796)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist
Born Chester County; surveyor, owner of tannery. Delegate provincial conference, 1775; colonel Chester County regiment, 1776; brigadier general Continental Army, 1777; served in battles of Brandywine, Germantown, Stony Point, Yorktown; defeated Creeks and Cherokees (British allies) in Georgia, 1782; negotiated treaties with them, 1782–83; retired as brevet major general, 1783. Delegate Council of Censors, favored revision of state constitution, 1783–84. Chester County assemblyman, 1784–86; delegate state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. Moved to Georgia and elected to U.S. House of Representatives, March 1791; seat declared vacant, March 1792, because of election irregularities and residence qualification. Appointed major general commanding U.S. Army in Northwest Territory, 1791; defeated Indians at Fallen Timbers, 1794; negotiated treaty of Greenville, 1795; appointed sole government commissioner for dealing with western Indians and receiver of military posts given up by British.

WHITEHILL, ROBERT (1738–1813)
Constitutionalist/Antifederalist/Democratic-Republican

WILSON, JAMES (1742–1798)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist
Born Scotland; educated St. Andrews, Glasgow, and Edinburgh universities; came to Pennsylvania, 1765; studied law with John Dickinson; admitted to Philadelphia bar, 1767. Moved to Reading and then Carlisle. Elected to Continental Congress, May 1775; opposed independence, but voted for it on 2 July 1776. Moved to Philadelphia, 1778. Opponent of state constitution; a member Republican Society, 1779. Reelected to Congress, 1776, 1777, 1782, 1785; advocated measures to strengthen central government; defended Bank of North America. Delegate Constitutional Convention, member Committee of Detail, 1787. Speech at State House Yard, 6 Oct. 1787, provided standard arguments for supporters of Constitution. Delegate state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. Presidential Elector, 1789; delegate state constitutional convention and principal author of new state constitution, 1789–90. Associate justice U.S. Supreme Court, 1789–98. Failure of land speculations led to flight to New Jersey in
1797 and then to North Carolina to escape imprisonment for debt in Pennsylvania. Died in North Carolina.

YEATES, JASPER (1745–1817)
Republican/Federalist/Federalist

Born Philadelphia; graduate College of Philadelphia, 1761; admitted to Philadelphia bar, 1765. Moved to Lancaster. Chairman committee of correspondence, 1775; captain of associates, 1776; congressional commissioner at Fort Pitt conference with Indians, 1776. Delegate state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. Associate justice, state Supreme Court, 1791–1817; federal commissioner to confer with Whiskey insurrectionists, 1794; acquitted in impeachment trial (along with two other justices), 1805; four volumes of his reports of Supreme Court cases (1791–1808) published after his death.

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