Delaware Biographical Gazetteer

The following sketches outline the political careers of the principal Delaware leaders. Their affiliations in state politics are indicated by the terms "Whig" and "Tory" and in national politics after 1789 by the terms "Federalist" and "Democratic-Republican."

BASSETT, RICHARD (1745–1815) Tory/Federalist
Born Cecil County, Md. Studied law with Judge Robert Goldsborough of Dorchester County, Md. Practiced law in Dover, Del. Member council of safety, 1776. Delegate to state constitutional convention, 1776. Kent member of Council, 1776–78, 1782–83. Militia officer, 1779–81. Kent delegate to House, 1786–87. Delegate to Annapolis Convention, 1786. Delegate to Constitutional Convention, signed Constitution, 1787. Delegate to state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. U.S. Senator, 1789–93. Delegate to state constitutional convention, 1792. Chief justice Court of Common Pleas, 1793–99. Presidential Elector, 1797. Governor, 1799–1801.

BEDFORD, GUNNING, JR. (1747–1812) Whig/Democratic-Republican
Born Philadelphia. Cousin of Gunning Bedford, Sr. College of New Jersey (Princeton University) B.A. 1771. Studied law with Joseph Reed of Philadelphia. Admitted to Sussex County, Del. bar, 1779. Practiced law in Dover and then in Wilmington. Delegate to Congress, 1783–85. Attorney general, 1784–89. Elected to Annapolis Convention, 1786, did not attend. New Castle delegate to House, 1786–87. Delegate to Constitutional Convention, signed Constitution, 1787. Delegate to state Convention, voted to ratify, 1787. New Castle member of Council, 1788–89. Presidential Elector, 1789, 1793. U.S. district judge for Delaware, 1789–1812.

BROOM, JACOB (1752–1810) Tory/Federalist
Born Wilmington; surveyor, businessman. Assistant burgess of Wilmington, 1776; chief burgess, 1783, 1785, 1794. New Castle delegate to House, 1784–87, 1788–89. Delegate to Constitutional Convention, signed Constitution, 1787. Postmaster of Wilmington, 1790–92. Director Bank of Delaware, 1806–10.

COLLINS, THOMAS (1732–1789) Tory/
Born Kent County. Sheriff Kent County, 1764–67. Militia officer, 1776–83. Member council of safety, 1776. Delegate to state constitutional convention, 1776. Kent member of Council, 1776–77, 1778–80, 1781–82 (speaker, 1778–79, 1780–81). Chief justice Kent County Court of Common Pleas, 1782–86. President of Delaware, 1786–89.

Dickinson, John (1732–1808) Tory/Federalist; Democratic-Republican
Born Talbot County, Md. Family moved to Kent County, Del., 1740. Studied law in Philadelphia and in Middle Temple, London. Admitted to Philadelphia bar, 1757. Kent delegate to House and speaker, 1760–61. Philadelphia County delegate to Assembly, 1762–65, 1774–77. Author of *The Late Regulations Respecting the British Colonies* . . . (1765). Pennsylvania delegate to Stamp Act Congress, 1765 (drafted declaration of rights). Author of "Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania," 1767–68. Philadelphia City delegate to Assembly, 1770–71 (author of petition to the king, 1771). Pennsylvania delegate to Congress, 1774–76 (author of first and second petitions to the King, 1774, 1775; revised Thomas Jefferson's draft of Declaration on Taking up Arms, 1775; chairman of committee to draft Articles of Confederation, 1776; voted against resolution declaring independence and absent when Declaration of Independence adopted, 1776). Chairman Philadelphia committee of correspondence, 1774. Chairman Pennsylvania committee of safety, 1775–76. Pennsylvania militia colonel, 1775–76. Philadelphia County delegate to Assembly, 1776–77 (resigned in dispute over new state constitution). Delaware delegate to Congress, 1779 (signed Articles of Confederation). New Castle member of Council, 1781. President of Delaware, 1781–82. President Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, 1782–85. Delaware delegate to and chairman of Annapolis Convention, 1786. Delaware delegate to Constitutional Convention, 1787 (George Read signed Constitution for him). Author of "Fabius" letters supporting Constitution, 1788. President Delaware constitutional convention, 1792. Author of "Fabius" letters supporting continued alliance with France, 1797.

Read, George (1733–1798) Tory/Federalist
Born Cecil County, Md. Raised in New Castle County, Del. Studied law in Philadelphia. Admitted to Philadelphia bar, 1753. Attorney general for "Lower Counties," 1763–74. Opposed Stamp Act, 1765. New Castle delegate to House, 1765, 1768–76, 1781–82. Delegate to Congress, 1774–77 (voted against independence, but signed Declaration of Independence, 1776). President of state constitutional convention, 1776. New Castle member of Council, 1776–79, 1782–88 (speaker, 1776–78; author of resolutions ratifying Articles of Confederation, 1779; author of act appointing delegates to Constitutional Convention, 1787). Acting President of Delaware, 1777–78. Appointed by Congress judge of court of appeals in cases of capture, 1782. Delegate to Annapolis Convention, 1786. Delegate to Constitutional Convention, signed Constitution, 1787. U.S. Senator, 1789–93. Chief Justice state Supreme Court, 1793–98.

Rodney, Thomas (1744–1811) Whig/Democratic-Republican
Born Kent County. Brother of Caesar Rodney. Businessman in Philadelphia, 1772–74, and in Wilmington, 1781–83. Kent County justice of peace, 1770, 1774. Member Kent County committee of correspondence, 1774–75. Member Kent County committee of inspection, 1775–76. Organized volunteer militia force, 1775. Kent delegate to House, 1775–76. Member committee of safety, 1776. Appointed militia colonel, 1778. Judge state admiralty court, 1778–85. Register of wills for Kent County, 1778–88. Declined chief justiceship of Kent County Court of Common Pleas, 1778. Delegate to Congress, 1781–82, 1786. Kent delegate to House, 1786–88 (speaker, 1787). In debtors' prison, 1791–92. Elected president of Delaware Agricultural Society, 1798.

Justice state Supreme Court, 1802–3. Appointed land commissioner of Mississippi Territory, 1803. U.S. judge of Mississippi Territory, 1803–11.

Tilton, James (1745–1822) Whig/Democratic-Republican
Born Kent County. College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), B.M., 1768, M.D. 1771. Practiced medicine in Dover. Medical officer state militia and Continental Army, 1775–77. In charge of U.S. Army hospitals, 1777–80. Senior military hospital physician and surgeon, 1780, and operated military hospital in Williamsburg, Va., 1781. Delegate to Congress, 1783–84. Member Delaware Cincinnati (president, 1783–84). Kent member of Council, 1785–88. State commissioner of loans, 1785–1801. Author of *Biographical History of Dionysius* . . . (1788). First president of Delaware Medical Society, 1789. Physician and surgeon general of U.S. Army, 1813–15. Author of *Economical Observations on Military Hospitals* . . . (1813) and of *Regulations for the Medical Department* (1814). Member Delaware Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, Patriotic Society, and Lyceum of Delaware.

cite as: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. III: Delaware, New Jersey, Georgia, and Connecticut (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 1978), 114–15.