



CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

csac.history.wisc.edu > Ratification at a Glance > New Hampshire > Commentaries on the
Adjournment of the New Hampshire Convention

John Quincy Adams: Diary Exeter, N.H., 21–22 February 1788

21 February 1788

Mrs. Emery and her daughter were going to Exeter this morning in a single sleigh. Dr. [David] Kilham and I after greatly debating the question had likewise determined to go: so we agreed to divide; the Doctor went with Mrs. Emery and I with the young lady. It was just eleven o'clock when we started; and the roads were so difficult, that we did not get to Exeter till three nor the other sleigh till five. After sitting down my companion [and] I went and dined, and then immediately proceeded to the meeting house where the State Convention for the State of New Hampshire were debating upon the subject of the federal Constitution. I found Mr. [John] Pickering a member from Portsmouth zealously though I cannot add very forcibly arguing for the good cause. Several other members spoke; but none of them, in my opinion much to the purpose: They have gone through the System by paragraphs: and are now considering it generally.—I found Mr. [John] Shaw, Mr. [John] Thaxter[, Jr.,] and a number more of our Haverhill friends there; and pass'd the evening with them at Mr. [perhaps Oliver] Peabody's; a friend of the Doctor's; where we lodg'd; for there was not a bed to be had at any of the public houses. We were disappointed of an assembly this evening as we expected; and the debates I really think were not worth the ride, in a cold day; but the satisfaction of riding with an amiable girl; and the novelty of the town which I never saw before, will in some measure compensate for the failure of my expectations

22 February 1788

I attended to hear the debates in convention again this forenoon. Mr. [John] Langdon began by making a motion that the Convention should adjourn to some future day: But said he would waive his motion if any gentleman had further observations to make upon the System. Mr. [Joshua] Atherton the leader of the opposition rose, and in a speech of more than an hour recapitulated every objection that he could invent against the constitution. He observed that *confederation* was derived from the Latin word *foedus*; and that *consolidation* was a metaphorical expression borrowed from the operations of chemistry; these were two of his most ingenious ideas, and upon the whole I think he may candidly be pronounced a miserable speaker, and a worse reasoner.—A reverend parson [Benjamin] Thirston spoke as long, and as little to the purpose on the other side. He talk'd of France's demanding her money with the dagger in her hand; and of Britain's sending 50 sail of the line and 60,000 men to take New Hampshire But did not even attempt to support the plan, upon the fair and honourable basis of national argu-

mentation. When these two gentlemen had exhausted the resources of their lungs the motion for an adjournment was again brought upon the carpet. This was the offspring of the fears of the federal party; and was faintly opposed by the other factions who appeared to be equally fearful of the event; though more confident in their numbers. the vote for adjournment however was carried by a trifling majority. The time and place at which they should meet again was a subject of some conversation, but finally the third wednesday in June, & Concord were agreed upon. — We dined at Mr. Peabody's. Dr. Kilham was troubled with the impertinence of one Hopkinson, a distracted fellow, who came and pretended to call him to an account for coming and intermeddling with concerns, in which he was not interested. A little after three we got into the sleigh, and between 6 and 7 cross'd the river from Salisbury. — I immediately went to Thompson's. I found Little there, and Putnam came in soon after: we pass'd the evening in sociable chat till 9 when I returned home

CITE AS: John P. Kaminski et al., eds., *The Documentary History of the Ratification of the Constitution*, Vol. XXVIII: New Hampshire (Madison, Wis.: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2017), 229–31.