

# An Assembly of Demigods

## William Paterson

### **William Pierce: Sketches of Members of the Constitutional Convention**

M. Paterson is one of those kind of Men whose powers break in upon you, and create wonder and astonishment. He is a Man of great modesty, with looks that bespeak talents of no great extent,—but he is a Classic, a Lawyer, and an Orator,—and of a disposition so favorable to his advancement that every one seemed ready to exalt him with their praises. He is very happy in the choice of time and manner of engaging in a debate, and never speaks but when he understands his subject well. This Gentleman is about 34 years of age, of a very low stature.

### **William Maclay: Journal, July 16, 1789**

Of All the Members of our House, the Conduct of Patterson surprises me most. He has been characterized to me as a Staunch Revolution Man & Genuine Whig. Yet he has in every republican Question deserted and in some instances betrayed Us. I know not that there is such a thing as buying Members, but if there is he is certainly sold.

### **William Richardson Davie to James Iredell, Halifax, N.C., June 12, 1793**

I left Judge Patterson at Newbern, detained by the criminal business, his deportment as a Judge was highly approved; his fine understanding, affable manner, and social temper, make him a most agreeable man; you will be greatly pleased with him.

### **Jeremiah Smith to William Plumer, Philadelphia, February 24, 1795**

Patterson is unquestionably the ablest Judge—Well I shall tell you more about it in the afternoon—[Smith reports in the afternoon on the Supreme Court's decision in *Penhallow v. Doane's Administrators*, especially praising Paterson's decision.] You would have been delighted—The rest of the Court were like a mole-hills besides the Alps—I speak the general sentiment—How ridiculous to appoint old men to such offices. Patterson appears to be a young man, perhaps 45—It is astonishing how so good a man should ever have been appointed a Governor?

If we only had a few such men the Lord would save this Country as he promised to do Sodom—But you know I am extravagant in my praises as well as Censures—