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Vermont Biographical Gazetteer

The following sketches outline the political careers of the principal Vermont leaders who participated in the process of ratifying the U.S. Constitution. Their political positions are indicated on the Constitution in 1791 and in national politics after that time (Federalist or Democratic-Republican). Inclusive years, especially for state offices, reflect periods of repeated, not successive, office-holding. The (?) following Ira Allen and Thomas Chittenden's political positions on the U.S. Constitution reflects each man's ambivalence about supporting ratification. Both men signed the form of ratification.

ALLEN, IRA (1751–1814) Federalist (?)/(?)

Born, Cornwall, Conn. Entrepreneur and surveyor. Moved to the New Hampshire Grants in 1770. With brothers Ethan, Heman, and Zimri, formed the Onion River Land Company, 1773. Lt. in the Continental Army, 1775; helped draw up Vermont constitution (1777) and wrote the preamble. Member of Vermont council of safety, 1777 (secretary); Council member, 1778–85; and state treasurer and surveyor general, 1778–86. Represented Colchester in Vermont General Assembly, 1787–92, 1794. Donated land to assist in founding the University of Vermont, 1789. Represented Colchester in Vermont's ratifying Convention, 1791, where he voted in favor of ratification. Allen's later years were marked by intrigue and plagued with debt, litigation, and economic privation. He died a pauper in Philadelphia.

BRADLEY, STEPHEN ROW (1754–1830) Federalist/Democratic-Republican

Born in Wallingford (now Cheshire), Conn. Graduate, Yale College, 1775; M.A., 1778. Captain and major, Connecticut militia, 1776–79; served as commissary, quartermaster, and aide-de-camp to Gen. David Wooster. He read law with celebrated Judge Tapping Reeve in Litchfield. He moved to Vermont in 1779 where he was admitted to the bar and practiced in Westminster. He served as an agent to the Continental Congress and wrote a pamphlet, *Vermont's Appeal to the Candid and Impartial World* . . . (Hartford, Conn., 1780), seeking Vermont independence. Windham County register of probate, 1781–91; Windham County judge, 1788; Vermont General Assembly (clerk), 1779, and then represented Westminster in that body, 1781–82, 1784–85, 1788, 1790–91, 1800 (speaker, 1785). He was Westminster town clerk, 1787–88; judge of the Vermont Supreme Court, 1788–89; and a commissioner negotiating the New York-Vermont Treaty, 1789–90. Voted for ratification of the Constitution in the Vermont Convention, 1791. Member, U.S. Senate, 1791–95, 1801–13 (president pro tempore, 1802–3, 1808). In 1794, he introduced the bill with a new design for the American flag with fifteen stars and fifteen stripes, which became

the “Star Spangled Banner” flying over Fort McHenry in 1814. Served in Vermont Council, 1798. He drafted the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution in 1803. He was the chairman of the Democratic-Republican congressional caucus that nominated Thomas Jefferson (1804) and James Madison (1808) as presidential candidates and George Clinton as vice president. He moved to Walpole, Vt., in 1818.

CHIPMAN, NATHANIEL (1752–1843) Federalist/Federalist

Born in Salisbury, Conn. Graduate, Yale College, 1777. Served in the Continental Army from 1777 to 1778, resigning as a lieutenant. He read law with celebrated Judge Tapping Reeve in Litchfield and was admitted to the Connecticut bar in March 1779. He moved to Tinmouth, Vt., where he was admitted to the bar in June 1779 and set up his practice. He served as state’s attorney for Rutland County, 1781–85, and in the Vermont General Assembly, 1784–85, 1806–9, 1811. He was appointed to revise the state’s laws in 1784, 1797, and 1836. In 1786 he was appointed to the Vermont Supreme Court, but resigned the next year. He was a commissioner negotiating the New York-Vermont Treaty, 1789–90. He was chief judge of the Vermont Supreme Court, 1789–91, 1796–97, 1813–15. He voted to ratify the U.S. Constitution in the Vermont Convention in January 1791, and was sent as an agent to negotiate statehood with Congress in 1791. He served as U.S. district judge, 1791–93; as U.S. Senator, 1797–1803; and as a member of the Vermont Council of Censors, 1813. Professor of law, Middlebury College, 1816–17.

CHITTENDEN, THOMAS (1730–1797) Federalist (?)/Federalist

Born in East Guilford, Conn. In 1749, he moved to Salisbury, Conn., where he was a farmer and served as justice of the peace, militia colonel, and member of the colonial assembly, 1765–72. He moved to Williston, Vt., in 1774, where he was involved in land speculation. In 1777, he served in both the provincial convention that drafted the declaration of independence for the New Hampshire Grants and the convention that drafted Vermont’s first constitution, as well as serving as president of the council of safety. In 1778 he was elected governor, a position he was reelected to by popular vote (except for 1789–90) until 1797 when he resigned shortly before his death. He was president of the Vermont Convention in which he voted to ratify the Constitution in January 1791.

HOPKINS, ROSWELL (1757–1829) Federalist/Federalist

Born Amenia, N.Y. Surgeon in militia and aboard privateer during the Revolutionary War. Moved to Vergennes, Vt., in 1786. Clerk of courts in Addison County, 1786–1801; clerk of the Vermont General Assembly, 1779–88; and secretary of state, 1788–1802. Moved to St. Lawrence County, N.Y., in 1803.

ROBINSON, MOSES (1742–1813) Federalist/Democratic-Republican

Born in Hardwick, Mass., Robinson was the son of Samuel Robinson, the founder of Bennington, Vt. He came to Bennington with his father in 1761 and in 1762 became the first town clerk, holding the position until 1781. He was a colonel in the militia during the Revolutionary War; a member of the council of safety, 1777–78; a judge on the revolutionary courts of sequestration and confiscation; a member of the Vermont Council, 1778–84; chief judge of the Supreme

Court, 1778–84, 1785–89; and governor, 1789–90. He was vice president of the Vermont Convention and voted to ratify the Constitution in January 1791. Member, U.S. Senate, 1791–96. He served on the Council of Censors in 1799 and in the state General Assembly in 1802.

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