

## A CATALOGUE OF MANUSCRIPTS BY SIGNERS OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

*Exhibited at the Clements Library*

July to December, 1951

For more than a hundred years collectors of American manuscripts and letters have pleased themselves with attempts to gather collections of letters written by the high-minded men who voted for and signed the Declaration of Independence. The forming of such sets has not been easy. Several Signers wrote and signed few documents which have survived our hundred and seventy-five years of Independence. Hundreds and hundreds of sets have been put together lacking only the signatures of two men—Button Gwinnett and Thomas Lynch, Jr. Today, there are believed to be thirty-four complete sets.

The distinguished collection exhibited at the Clements Library and described in this catalogue was loaned to us by Dr Joseph E. Fields, a Clements Library Associate of Joliet, Illinois. Dr Fields has worked for many years trying to bring his collection of Signers as close to perfection as possible. (Perfection would be fifty-six autograph letters, signed, written on July 4, 1776, describing the writers' reasons, emotions, or actions when signing the great document.) Failing impossible perfection, Dr Fields has gathered letters with important contents, typical of their writers, written as close to July 4, 1776, as possible.

The exhibition was opened on July 5 with a special showing for members of the History Department and the Department's graduate students. The following evening, we displayed the collection at a reception in honor of the staff and students of the Department of Library Science. During the fall, numerous groups of junior high school and high school pupils visited the Library to see the exhibition. Associates received special invitations to visit the exhibition on the mornings of home football games.

JOHN ADAMS. (1735-1826) *Signer from Massachusetts. Autograph Letter signed. Quincy, February 2, 1814. To Mercy Warren.*

\*\*\* "I send you a Curiosity. Mr M'Kean is mistaken in a day or two, the final Vote of Independence, after the last debate, was passed on the 2d or third of July, and the Declaration prepared and Signed on the 4th.

"What are we to think of History? When in less than 40 Years Such Diversities appear in the Memories of living Persons who were Witnesses."

SAMUEL ADAMS. (1722-1803) *Signer from Massachusetts. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, July 29, 1775. To Colonel Warren.*

\*\*\* "I must inform you that you were yesterday unanimously chosen Paymaster General with the pay of 100 Dollars pr month, if I do not misremember."

JOSIAH BARTLETT. (1729-1795) *Signer from New Hampshire. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, July 14, 1776. To Mrs. Bartlett.*

\*\*\* "But I hope & trust that the Supreme Disposer of all Events, who loveth Justice & hateth iniquity will Continue to favor our righteous Cause and that the wickedness of our Enemies will fall on their own heads."

CARTER BRAXTON. (1736-1797) *Signer from Virginia. Autograph Letter signed. Cherry Cook, July 7, 1777. To Mr. Hudson.*

\*\*\* "Business as usual." It is difficult to read into this letter any awareness of war, except in the remark, "Your Iron is here in great demand as far as fifty or sixty pounds a Ton . . ."

CHARLES CARROLL of Carrollton. (1737-1832) *Signer from Maryland. Autograph Letter signed. Baltimore, February 15, 1827. To John P. Paca.*

\*\*\* "Your father & myself were always on the very best terms, our political views & principles were ever in unison, we signed at the same time the declaration of Independence."

SAMUEL CHASE. (1741-1811) *Signer from Maryland. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, July 20, 1776. To Philip Schuyler.*

\*\*\* "The Bearer hereof Capt. Johnson is not the person accused of plunder . . ." The note also contains an autograph manuscript statement signed by Charles Carrol of Carrollton. Thus, in a 1776 letter, there are signatures of two Signers!

ABRAHAM CLARK. (1726-1794) *Signer from New Jersey. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, August 2, 1776. To James Caldwell.*

\*\*\* August 2 was the first day on which the engrossed copy of the Declaration was ready for the signatures of the Signers.

GEORGE CLYMER. (1739-1813) *Signer from Pennsylvania. Autograph Letter signed. Jamaica Plains, September 4, 1774. To Samuel Meredith.*

\*\*\* "But if other Provinces are too backward, [Massachusetts] is fully ripe in every part, nothing but the most guarded Conduct on the part of the General [Thomas Gage] can secure its quiet, for the least movement of the Troops will be followed by a general Insurrection."

WILLIAM ELLERY. (1727-1820) *Signer from Rhode Island. Autograph Letter signed. Newport, January 19, 1804. To James Madison.*

\*\*\* "I am informed that measures have been devised or are devising to procure my removal from Office—What allegations have been or may be made against me to accomplish this purpose I don't know, and therefore cannot undertake to invalidate them."

WILLIAM FLOYD. (1734-1821) *Signer from New York. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, January 5, 1779. Recipient unnamed.*

\*\*\* "The publications of Mr Dean, and Mr Paine make a great talk in this place, and I am afraid will throw Congress and the people at Large into violent parties."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. (1706-1790) *Signer from Pennsylvania. Autograph Note signed. Philadelphia, August 26, 1776. To Colonel Bull.*

\*\*\* The letter is franked by Franklin "B Free Franklin."

ELBRIDGE GERRY. (1744-1814) *Signer from Massachusetts. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, October 4, 1776. Recipient unnamed.*

\*\*\* "Great Delays have taken place in ye marine Department, I am sure it is high Time to adopt a Plan for a Board of Admiralty that can be obliged to attend the Business."

BUTTON GWINNETT. (1732-1777) *Signer from Georgia. Document signed. [November 5, 1761.]*

\*\*\* The document is part of a leaf from "The Orders and Rules of the Charity-School for Boys in the Parish of Wolverhampton" It is signed by Gwinnett as one of the "Subscribers" of the institution.

LYMAN HALL. (1724-1790) *Signer from Georgia. Autograph Letter signed. Pedee, South Carolina, January 25, 1780. Recipient unnamed.*

\*\*\* Request for a flag to permit Mr. Miller to pass through the lines.

JOHN HANCOCK. (1737-1793) *Signer from Massachusetts. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, December 2, 1776. To Governor Cooke.*

\*\*\* "The Inclos'd Resolutions I Transmit you by order of Congress."

BENJAMIN HARRISON. (1726-1791) *Signer from Virginia. Autograph Letter signed. Beckley, James River, January 14, 1779. To Jonathan Hudson.*

\*\*\* In this letter, Harrison offers Hudson "one of the finest and fastest sailing Vessels ever built in America" which he expects to finish building in May. The ship was to have been fitted for eighteen guns.

JOHN HART. (1707?-1779) *Signer from New Jersey. Autograph Document signed. January 1, 1778.*

\*\*\* A receipt in favor of Col. Jacob Drake.

JOSEPH HEWES. (1730-1779) *Signer from North Carolina. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, June 5, 1775. To Samuel Johnston.*

\*\*\* "I am exceedingly uneasy (so are my Colleagues) not that I think we are doing any thing but what Necessity will Justify, but I fear we shall be obliged to promise for our Colony much more than it will perform and perhaps more than it is able to bear . . ."

THOMAS HEYWARD, JR. (1746-1809) *Signer from South Carolina. Autograph Letter signed. White Hall, August 20, 1799. Recipient unnamed.*

\*\*\* The letter contains Heyward's promise to attend Court when necessary.

WILLIAM HOOPER. (1742-1790) *Signer from North Carolina. Autograph Letter signed. No place, no date. Recipient unnamed.*

\*\*\* This excellent war letter contains a strong plea for filling the North Carolina regiments.

STEPHEN HOPKINS. (1707-1785) *Signer from Rhode Island. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, July 6, 1775. To Ruth G. Hopkins.*

\*\*\* "Your Mother has been poorly this Three Weeks taken first with a fever and flux a common disorder here at that Time . . ."

FRANCIS HOPKINSON. (1737-1791) *Signer from New Jersey. Autograph Letter signed. Borden Town, November 14, 1777. To George Washington.*

\*\*\* "The Intimacy of my Connection with Mr. Duché renders all assurances unnecessary that the Letter addressed by him to your Excellency on the 8th of Octr last, gave me the greatest Concern."

**SAMUEL HUNTINGTON.** (1731-1796) *Signer from Connecticut.* Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, January 19, 1776. To Jabez Huntington.

\*\*\* "... I suppose before this you will receive the disagreeable News of the Death of the Brave General Montgomery in the unsuccessful attempt to Scale the City of Quebec."

**THOMAS JEFFERSON.** (1743-1826) *Signer from Virginia.* Autograph Letter signed. Monticello, October 17, 1800. To General S. Smith.

\*\*\* "Mr. Yznardi had asked me to accept two casks of wine, my answer mentioned that I had made it a rule to accept no presents while in public office: that as this rule was general it could not give offence to anybody."

**FRANCIS LIGHTFOOT LEE.** (1734-1797) *Signer from Virginia.* Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, January 22, 1776. To Landon Carter.

\*\*\* "The French & Spaniards do not seem inclined to furnish us with military stores. Their politics plainly tend, to drive us to extremity, that we may be forced to break off all connection with G.B. and join with them, which they know, nothing but hard necessity can ever effect. indeed the Ministry appear determined to leave us no alternative, but absolute submission, or foreign assistance, which will be your choice my friend? will it not be wise, in time to leave a people who are so corrupt, that their ruin must be inevitable?"

**RICHARD HENRY LEE.** (1756-1818) *Signer from Virginia.* Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, March 25, 1776. To Charles Lee.

\*\*\* "Gen. Washington entered Boston this day sennight, the enemy having quitted it with some precipitation, and apparent apprehension of being disturbed in their retreat."

**FRANCIS LEWIS.** (1713-1803) *Signer from New York.* Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, August 2, 1775. Recipient unnamed.

\*\*\* "I have the honor to inform you that this morning the Congress adjourned . . . and immediately the members (except those from So Carolina) sett of for the Camp at Cambridge."

**PHILIP LIVINGSTON.** (1716-1778) *Signer from New York.* Autograph Letter signed. Hurly, March 8, 1778. Recipient unnamed.

\*\*\* "the Late Intended Expedition to Canada wd Make a Most Glorious Farce (Genl. Gates the Principal Actor) If it was not to Serious a Mattr. to Ridicule."

**THOMAS LYNCH, JR.** (1749-1779) *Signer from South Carolina.* Signature "Lynch." [After 1766.]

\*\*\* This tiny clipped signature is from a volume of Swift's *Works* (London, 1766) which passed from the Signer to his sister and remained in her family until late in the nineteenth century. From the Lyman C. Draper, Charles F. Gunther, and Chicago Historical Society collections.

**THOMAS MCKEAN.** (1734-1817) *Signer from Delaware.* Autograph Letter, signature torn out, another supplied. Philadelphia, January, 1814. To John Adams.

\*\*\* "On the 1st of July 1776 the question was taken in the Committee of the whole of Congress, when Pennsylvania, represented by seven members, then present, voted against it . . . Delaware (having only two present, namely myself & Mr Read) was divided; all the other States voted in favor of it. The report was delayed until the 4th and in the meantime I sent an express for Cæsar Rodney to Dover in the County of Kent in Delaware, at my private expence, whom I met at the State House door on the 4th of July in his Boots; he resided eighty miles from the city, and just arrived as Congress met. The question was taken, Dela-

ware voted in favor of Independence;—Pennsylvania (there being only five members present . . .) voted for it . . . Then the thirteen States were unanimous in favor of Independence."

**ARTHUR MIDDLETON.** (1742-1787) *Signer from South Carolina.* Autograph Letter. Charleston, September 5, 1775. To William Henry Drayton.

\*\*\* "If you should not find it hot enough up your way, pray hasten down for in all probability we shall have warm work here e'er long—It is confidently said Transports & Frigates will be here soon." Middleton very rarely signed his letters.

**LEWIS MORRIS.** (1726-1798) *Signer from New York.* Autograph Letter signed. No place, 1782. To Nathanael Greene.

\*\*\* "And now my Dear Genl, I most sincerely congratulate you, on the evacuation of Charlestown, how happy must you be after all your toils and fatigues . . ."

**ROBERT MORRIS.** (1734-1806) *Signer from Pennsylvania.* Autograph Letter signed. Manheim, May 8, 1778. To Jonathan Hudson.

\*\*\* "It appears to me that a French War is inevitable, or else Great Britain must acknowledge our Independence on the same liberal & generous principles that the French have done, and altho' they may be glad to do this hereafter, yet I do not think the Pride & Dignity of that Nation can now be sufficiently humbled, to do it at this æra."

**JOHN MORTON.** (1724?-1777) *Signer from Pennsylvania.* Document signed. Philadelphia, February 23, 1776.

\*\*\* The document is "An Act to enable the Keepers of Records in the Counties of Philadelphia and Chester to remove them to more safe and convenient Places." It is signed by Morton as Speaker of the House. It is also signed by Joseph Shippen and John Penn.

**THOMAS NELSON, JR.** (1738-1789) *Signer from Virginia.* Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, August 13, 1776. To John Page.

\*\*\* "To increase our misfortunes, the Militia that went from this Province, I believe chiefly from this City, are deserting by Companies from Staten Island . . . Notwithstanding these disadvantages I think we shall maintain our ground."

**WILLIAM PACA.** (1740-1799) *Signer from Maryland.* Autograph Letter signed. Annapolis, February 14, 1781. Addressed "Gentlemen."

\*\*\* Under a strict construction of the Constitution, Paca felt obliged to serve on a committee to which he had been appointed.

**ROBERT TREAT PAINE.** (1731-1814) *Signer from Massachusetts.* Autograph Letter signed. Albany, November 21, 1775. To Philip Schuyler.

\*\*\* "This day I arrived here in Company with Mr. Langdon who together with Mr. Robert R Livingstone are a Committee from the Congress to repair to you & consult divers matters mentioned in your Letters to the Congress."

**JOHN PENN.** (1741-1788) *Signer from North Carolina.* Autograph Letter signed. No place, October 6, 1777. To Richard Caswell.

\*\*\* "This minute we had an express from Head Quarters & are informed that General Washington had harangued his Army who promised to follow him where he pleased, the express says."

**GEORGE READ.** (1733-1798) *Signer from Delaware.* Autograph Letter signed. No place [October, 1776]. To General Rodney.

\*\*\* "A Committee of Ten is employed in the drafting [of] a declaration of rights."

CAESAR RODNEY. (1728-1784) *Signer from Delaware*. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, May 17, 1776. To Thomas Rodney.

\*\*\* "Inclosed I have Sent you the printed Copy of the Resolution of Congress mentioned in my last—Most of those here who are termed the *Cool Cisiderate Men* think it amounts to a declaration of Independence—It certainly Savour's of it . . . "

GEORGE ROSS. (1730-1779) *Signer from Pennsylvania*. Autograph Letter signed. No place, January 14, 1770. To Cad. Morris.

\*\*\* Ross was trying to adjust his accounts with the estate of a Mr. Cameron in this letter.

BENJAMIN RUSH. (1745-1813) *Signer from Pennsylvania*. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, May 27, 1776. To Mrs. Julia Rush.

\*\*\* Among American love letters, those of Benjamin Rush stand very high. This charming example was written during Mrs. Rush's absence from home. "I did not know 'till since we parted how much you were a part of myself, and I feel some Abatement of my Affection for my country when I reflect that even She has deprived me of an hour of my dear Julia's Company."

EDWARD RUTLEDGE. (1749-1800) *Signer from South Carolina*. Autograph Letter signed. No place, November 6, 1776. Recipient unnamed; possibly George Washington.

\*\*\* This most interesting letter offers the recipient warm support in Congress, where "you have sustain'd for a length of Time an uncommon Load of Calumny."

ROGER SHERMAN. (1721-1793) *Signer from Connecticut*. Autograph Letter signed. Haven, October 15, 1776. To George Washington.

\*\*\* "Andrew Gilman who has the care of a party of Penobscot Indians on their march to Joyn the Army under Your Excellency's Command applied to Governor Trumble & the Council to furnish him with some money . . . "

JAMES SMITH. (1719-1806) *Signer from Pennsylvania*. Autograph Letter signed. York, April 28, 1802. To Jasper Yeates.

\*\*\* Smith had investigated a case of trespass on lands owned by himself and Yeates and in this letter reports his findings.

RICHARD STOCKTON. (1730-1781) *Signer from New Jersey*. Autograph Letter signed. Morven, October 12, 1775. To Benjamin Rush.

\*\*\* Rush was Stockton's son-in-law; he had apparently sent some political tracts as a gift for which Stockton thanks him warmly.

THOMAS STONE. (1743-1787) *Signer from Maryland*. Autograph Letter signed. *Haberdeventure*, July 8, 1782. To his brother.

\*\*\* This letter contains an amusing description of a sulkey which Stone wanted made for his own use to fit his size.

GEORGE TAYLOR. (1716-1781) *Signer from Pennsylvania*. Autograph Letter signed. Springford, July 13, 1769. To Thomas Wharton.

\*\*\* Taylor was concerned with the financing of the Pennsylvania Hospital which is the subject of the letter.

MATTHEW THORNTON. (1714-1803) *Signer from New Hampshire*. Autograph Letter signed. [London-derry, 1782.] To the Rev. Mr. Belknap.

\*\*\* Belknap had apparently sent a series of nine questions about Londonderry which Thornton answers in this letter.

GEORGE WALTON. (1741-1809) *Signer from Georgia*. Autograph Letter signed. No place, February 8, 1780. Recipient unnamed.

\*\*\* Walton here protests the removal of the Georgia government to South Carolina.

WILLIAM WHIPPLE. (1730-1785) *Signer from New Hampshire*. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, April 21, 1776. To Joshua Brackett.

\*\*\* "By the Inclosed papers You'll see the Disposition of the Southern Colonies, with Regard to Independence. I need not tell you the Disposition of the Northern Colonies. When you are sure there is a weight, somewhere, & find the Ends are free, it will not require a Newtonian head to determine the weight must be in the Middle. However there is no doubt with me but these difficulties will soon be removd."

WILLIAM WILLIAMS. (1731-1811) *Signer from Connecticut*. Autograph Letter signed. Lebanon, July 3, 1776. To Joseph Trumbull.

\*\*\* "The Govr having reed the most pressing Requests from Genl Washington, to hasten the Battalions of Militia raising here for the Relief of New York (which is also complying to our utmost Efforts) yet fearing it will be possible to get more of them there in Season, (the Same are beginning to march) He with the Council of Safety now Sitting, have ordered three Regts west of ye River, of Troops, who were regimented ye last Assembly, perhaps abt 600 men, to march forthwith, to serve untill the Militia Battalions can arrive . . . "

JAMES WILSON. (1742-1798) *Signer from Pennsylvania*. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, April 18, 1780. To Aaron Lopez.

\*\*\* "I have conversed with Mr Ellsworth and Mr Ellery upon the Subject of granting to you and Capt Wright a Protection from Congress for withdrawing your Property from Jamaica to the United States."

JOHN WITHERSPOON. (1723-1794) *Signer from New Jersey*. Autograph Letter signed. Princeton, February 23, 1787. To James Iredell.

\*\*\* " . . . in many Places of this Country the Languages are very imperfectly taught & it is what I have taken very much Pains to remedy in this Place."

OLIVER WOLCOTT. (1726-1797) *Signer from Connecticut*. Autograph Letter signed. Philadelphia, June 4, 1776. Recipient unnamed.

\*\*\* "I am glad to be informed by you that People seem determined in supporting the mighty Cause upon the Decision of which the Fate of this and future Generations depend . . . "

GEORGE WYTHE. (1726-1806) *Signer from Virginia*. Autograph Letter signed. No place, June 11, 1771. To Robert Carter.

\*\*\* This letter describes Wythe's actions regarding a slave belonging to the estate of Henry Randolph.