

# The Forgotten Presidents



**Peyton Randolph of Virginia (1723-1775)**

**By  
Willie Martin**

# **The Forgotten Presidents Parts 1 through 3 (The Last One) By Willie Martin**

## **The Forgotten Presidents - Part 1**

**Y**OU DON'T BELIEVE that the powers that be are destroying our children's history? Then when was the last time you read about these. If you were raised in the north, I bet even you never heard of these men. For the history books have been written by the damn Jews for so long that our people don't know their heritage.

### **The Forgotten Presidents By George Grant Excerpted from The Patriot's Handbook**

Who was the first president of the United States? Ask any school child and they will readily tell you "George Washington." And of course, they would be wrong; at least technically. Washington was not inaugurated until April 30, 1789. And yet, the United States continually had functioning governments from as early as September 5, 1774 and operated as a confederated nation from as early as July 4, 1776.

During that nearly fifteen year interval, Congress; first the Continental Congress and then later the Confederation Congress, was always moderated by a duly elected president. As the chief executive officer of the government of the United States, the president was recognized as the head of state.

Washington was thus the fifteenth in a long line of distinguished presidents; and he led the seventeenth administration, he just happened to be the first under the current constitution. So who were the luminaries who preceded him? The following brief biographies profile these "forgotten presidents."

Peyton Randolph of Virginia (1723-1775) When delegates gathered in

Philadelphia for the first Continental Congress, they promptly elected the former King's Attorney of Virginia as the moderator and president of their convocation. He was a propitious choice. He was a legal prodigy; having studied at the Inner Temple in London, served as his native colony's Attorney General, and tutored many of the most able men of the South at William and Mary College, including the young Patrick Henry.

His home in Williamsburg was the gathering place for Virginia's legal and political gentry, and it remains a popular attraction in the restored colonial capital. He had served as a delegate in the Virginia House of Burgesses, and had been a commander under William Byrd in the colonial militia. He was a scholar of some renown, having begun a self-guided reading of the classics when he was thirteen. Despite suffering poor health served the Continental Congress as president twice, in 1774 from September 5 to October 21, and then again for a few days in 1775 from May 10 to May 23. He never lived to see independence, yet was numbered among the nation's most revered founders.

**Henry Middleton (1717-1784)** America's second elected president was one of the wealthiest planters in the South, the patriarch of the most powerful families anywhere in the nation. His public spirit was evident from an early age. He was a member of his state's Common House from 1744-1747.

During the last two years he served as the Speaker. During 1755 he was the King's Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He was a member of the South Carolina Council from 1755-1770. His valor in the War with the Cherokees during 1760-1761 earned him wide recognition throughout the colonies; and demonstrated his cool leadership abilities while under pressure. He was elected as a delegate to the first session of the Continental Congress and when Peyton Randolph was forced to resign the presidency, his peers immediately turned to Middleton to complete the term. He served as the fledgling coalition's president from October 22, 1774 until Randolph was able to resume his duties briefly beginning on May 10, 1775. Afterward, he was a member of the Congressional Council of Safety and helped to establish the young nation's policy toward the encouragement and support of education.

In February 1776 he resigned his political involvements in order to prepare his family and lands for what he believed was inevitable war; but he was replaced by his son Arthur who eventually became a signer of both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation, served time as an English prisoner of war, and was twice elected Governor of his state.

**John Hancock (1737-1793)** The third president was a patriot, rebel leader, merchant who signed his name into immortality in giant strokes on the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The boldness of his signature has made it live in American minds as a perfect expression of the strength and freedom; and defiance, of the individual in the face of British tyranny. As President of the Continental Congress during two widely spaced terms; the first from May 24 1775 to October 30 1777 and the second from November 23, 1785 to June 5, 1786; Hancock was the presiding officer when the members approved the Declaration of Independence. Because of his position, it was his official duty to sign the document first, but not necessarily as dramatically as he did.

Hancock figured prominently in another historic event; the battle at Lexington: British troops who fought there April 10, 1775, had known Hancock and Samuel Adams were in Lexington and had come there to capture these rebel leaders. And the two would have been captured, if they had not been warned by Paul Revere. As early as 1768, Hancock defied the British by refusing to pay customs charges on the cargo of one of his ships. One of Boston's wealthiest merchants, he was recognized by the citizens, as well as by the British, as a rebel leader; and was elected President of the first Massachusetts Provincial Congress.

After he was chosen President of the Continental Congress in 1775, Hancock became known beyond the borders of Massachusetts, and, having served as colonel of the Massachusetts Governor's Guards he hoped to be named commander of the American forces—until John Adams nominated George Washington. In 1778 Hancock was commissioned Major General and took part in an unsuccessful campaign in Rhode Island. But it was as a political leader that his real distinction was earned; as the first Governor of Massachusetts, as President of Congress, and as President of the Massachusetts constitutional ratification convention.

He helped win ratification in Massachusetts, gaining enough popular recognition to make him a contender for the newly created Presidency of the United States, but again he saw Washington gain the prize. Like his rival, George Washington, Hancock was a wealthy man who risked much for the cause of independence. He was the wealthiest New Englander supporting the patriotic cause, and, although he lacked the brilliance of John Adams or the capacity to inspire of Samuel Adams, he became one of the foremost leaders of the new nation; perhaps, in part, because he was willing to commit so much at such risk to the cause of freedom.

**Henry Laurens (1724-1792)** The only American president ever to be held as a prisoner of war by a foreign power, Laurens was heralded after he was released as "the father of our country," by no less a personage than George Washington. He was of Huguenot extraction, his ancestors having come to America from France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes made the Reformed faith illegal. Raised and educated for a life of mercantilism at his home in Charleston, he also had the opportunity to spend more than a year in continental travel. It was while in Europe that he began to write revolutionary pamphlets; gaining him renown as a patriot.

He served as vice-president of South Carolina in 1776. He was then elected to the Continental Congress. He succeeded John Hancock as President of the newly independent but war beleaguered United States on November 1, 1777. He served until December 9, 1778 at which time he was appointed Ambassador to the Netherlands.

Unfortunately for the cause of the young nation, he was captured by an English warship during his cross-Atlantic voyage and was confined to the Tower of London until the end of the war. After the Battle of Yorktown, the American government regained his freedom in a dramatic prisoner exchange; President Laurens for Lord Cornwallis. Ever the patriot, Laurens continued to serve his nation as one of the three representatives selected to negotiate terms at the Paris Peace Conference in 1782.



## The Forgotten Presidents - Part 2

**John Jay (1745-1829)** America's first Secretary of State, first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, one of its first ambassadors, and author of some of the celebrated Federalist Papers, Jay was a Founding Father who, by a quirk of fate, missed signing the Declaration of Independence—at the time of the vote for independence and the signing, he had temporarily left the Continental Congress to serve in New York's revolutionary legislature.

Nevertheless, he was chosen by his peers to succeed Henry Laurens as President of the United States; serving a term from December 10, 1778 to September 27, 1779. A conservative New York lawyer who was at first against the idea of independence for the colonies, the aristocratic Jay in 1776 turned into a patriot who was willing to give the next twenty-five years of his life to help establish the new nation.

During those years, he won the regard of his peers as a dedicated and accomplished statesman and a man of unwavering principle. In the Continental Congress Jay prepared addresses to the people of Canada and Great Britain.

In New York he drafted the State constitution and served as Chief Justice during the war. He was President of the Continental Congress before he undertook the difficult assignment, as ambassador, of trying to gain support and funds from Spain. After helping Franklin, Jefferson, Adams, and Laurens complete peace negotiations in Paris in 1783, Jay returned to become the first Secretary of State, called "Secretary of Foreign Affairs" under the Articles of Confederation. He negotiated valuable commercial treaties with Russia and Morocco, and dealt with the continuing controversy with Britain and Spain over the southern and western boundaries of the United States.

He proposed that America and Britain establish a joint commission to arbitrate disputes that remained after the war; a proposal which, though not adopted, influenced the government's use of arbitration and diplomacy in settling later international problems. In this post Jay felt keenly the weakness of the Articles of Confederation and was one of the first to advocate a new governmental compact. He wrote five Federalist Papers

supporting the Constitution, and he was a leader in the New York ratification convention. As first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Jay made the historic decision that a State could be sued by a citizen from another State, which led to the Eleventh Amendment to the Constitution. On a special mission to London he concluded the "Jay Treaty," which helped avert a renewal of hostilities with Britain but won little popular favour at home; and it is probably for this treaty that this Founding Father is best remembered.

**Samuel Huntington (1732-1796)** An industrious youth who mastered his studies of the law without the advantage of a school, a tutor, or a master; borrowing books and snatching opportunities to read and research between odd jobs, he was one of the greatest self-made men among the Founders. He was also one of the greatest legal minds of the age, all the more remarkable for his lack of advantage as a youth. In 1764, in recognition of his obvious abilities and initiative, he was elected to the General Assembly of Connecticut.

The next year he was chosen to serve on the Executive Council. In 1774 he was appointed Associate Judge of the Superior Court and, as a delegate to the Continental Congress, was acknowledged to be a legal scholar of some respect. He served in Congress for five consecutive terms, during the last of which he was elected President. He served in that office from September 28, 1779 until ill health forced him to resign on July 9, 1781.

He returned to his home in Connecticut; and as he recuperated, he accepted more Councillor and Bench duties. He again took his seat in Congress in 1783, but left it to become Chief Justice of his state's Superior Court. He was elected Lieutenant Governor in 1785 and Governor in 1786. According to John Jay, he was "the most precisely trained Christian jurists ever to serve his country."

**Thomas McKean (1734-1817)** During his astonishingly varied fifty-year career in public life he held almost every possible position; from deputy county attorney to President of the United States under the Confederation. Besides signing the Declaration of Independence, he contributed significantly to the development and establishment of constitutional government in both his home state of Delaware and the nation. At the

Stamp Act Congress he proposed the voting procedure that Congress adopted: that each colony, regardless of size or population, have one vote, the practice adopted by the Continental Congress and the Congress of the Confederation, and the principle of state equality manifest in the composition of the Senate. And as county judge in 1765, he defied the British by ordering his court to work only with documents that did not bear the hated stamps.

In June 1776, at the Continental Congress, McKean joined with Caesar Rodney to register Delaware's approval of the Declaration of Independence, over the negative vote of the third Delaware delegate, George Read; permitting it to be "The unanimous declaration of the thirteen United States." And at a special Delaware convention, he drafted the constitution for that State. McKean also helped draft; and signed, the Articles of Confederation. It was during his tenure of service as President, from July 10, 1781 to November 4, 1782, when news arrived from General Washington in October 1781 that the British had surrendered following the Battle of Yorktown.

As Chief Justice of the supreme court of Pennsylvania, he contributed to the establishment of the legal system in that State, and, in 1787, he strongly supported the Constitution at the Pennsylvania Ratification Convention, declaring it "the best the world has yet seen." At sixty-five, after over forty years of public service, McKean resigned from his post as Chief Justice.

A candidate on the Democratic-Republican ticket in 1799, McKean was elected Governor of Pennsylvania. As Governor, he followed such a strict policy of appointing only fellow Republicans to office that he became the father of the spoils system in America. He served three tempestuous terms as Governor, completing one of the longest continuous careers of public service of any of the Founding Fathers.

**John Hanson (1715-1783)** He was the heir of one of the greatest family traditions in the colonies and became the patriarch of a long line of American patriots; his great grandfather died at Lutzen beside the great King Gustavus Aldophus of Sweden; his grandfather was one of the founders of New Sweden along the Delaware River in Maryland; one of his nephews was the military secretary to George Washington; another



was a signer of the Declaration; still another was a signer of the Constitution; yet another was Governor of Maryland during the Revolution; and still another was a member of the first Congress; two sons were killed in action with the Continental Army; a grandson served as a member of Congress under the new Constitution; and another grandson was a Maryland Senator.

Thus, even if Hanson had not served as President himself, he would have greatly contributed to the life of the nation through his ancestry and progeny. As a youngster he began a self-guided reading of classics and rather quickly became an acknowledged expert in the juridicalism of Anselm and the practical philosophy of Seneca, both of which were influential in the development of the political philosophy of the great leaders of the Reformation. It was based upon these legal and theological studies that the young planter; his farm, Mulberry Grove was just across the Potomac from Mount Vernon, began to espouse the cause of the patriots. In 1775 he was elected to the Provincial Legislature of Maryland.

Then in 1777, he became a member of Congress where he distinguished himself as a brilliant administrator. Thus, he was elected President in 1781. He served in that office from November 5, 1781 until November 3, 1782. He was the first President to serve a full term after the full ratification of the Articles of Confederation; and like so many of the Southern and New England Founders, he was strongly opposed to the Constitution when it was first discussed. He remained a confirmed anti-federalist until his untimely death.



### **The Forgotten Presidents - Part 3 (Last One)**

**Elias Boudinot (1741-1802)** He did not sign the Declaration, the Articles, or the Constitution. He did not serve in the Continental Army with distinction. He was not renowned for his legal mind or his political skills. He was instead a man who spent his entire career in foreign diplomacy. He earned the respect of his fellow patriots during the dangerous days following the traitorous action of Benedict Arnold.

His deft handling of relations with Canada also earned him great praise. After being elected to the Congress from his home state of New Jersey, he served as the new nation's Secretary for Foreign Affairs; managing the influx of aid from France, Spain, and Holland. The in 1783 he was elected to the Presidency. He served in that office from November 4, 1782 until November 2, 1783. Like so many of the other early presidents, he was a classically trained scholar, of the Reformed faith, and an anti-federalist in political matters. He was the father and grandfather of frontiersmen, and one of his grandchildren and namesakes eventually became a leader of the Cherokee nation in its bid for independence from the sprawling expansion of the United States.

**Thomas Mifflin (1744-1800)** By an ironic sort of providence, Thomas Mifflin served as George Washington's first aide-de-camp at the beginning of the Revolutionary War, and, when the war was over, he was the man, as President of the United States, who accepted Washington's resignation of his commission. In the years between, Mifflin greatly served the cause of freedom—and, apparently, his own cause; while serving as the first Quartermaster General of the Continental Army. He obtained desperately needed supplies for the new army, and was suspected of making excessive profit himself. Although experienced in business and successful in obtaining supplies for the war, Mifflin preferred the front lines, and he distinguished himself in military actions on Long Island and near Philadelphia. Born and reared a Quaker, he was excluded from their meetings for his military activities.

A controversial figure, Mifflin lost favour with Washington and was part of the Conway Cabal, a rather notorious plan to replace Washington with General Horatio Gates. And Mifflin narrowly missed court-martial action over his handling of funds by resigning his commission in 1778.

In spite of these problems, and of repeated charges that he was a drunkard, Mifflin continued to be elected to positions of responsibility; as President and Governor of Pennsylvania, delegate to the Constitutional Convention, as well as the highest office in the land; where he served from November 3, 1783 to November 29, 1784. Most of Mifflin's significant contributions occurred in his earlier years, in the First and Second Continental

Congresses he was firm in his stand for independence and for fighting for it, and he helped obtain both men and supplies for Washington's army in the early critical period. In 1784, as President, he signed the treaty with Great Britain which ended the war. Although a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, he did not make a significant contribution, beyond signing the document.

As Governor of Pennsylvania, although he was accused of negligence, he supported improvements of roads, and reformed the State penal and judicial systems. He had gradually become sympathetic to Jefferson's principles regarding State's rights, even so, he directed the Pennsylvania militia to support the Federal tax collectors in the Whiskey Rebellion. In spite of charges of corruption, the affable Mifflin remained a popular figure. A magnetic personality and an effective speaker, he managed to hold a variety of elective offices for almost thirty years of the critical Revolutionary period.

**Richard Henry Lee (1732-1794)** His resolution "that these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States," approved by the Continental Congress July 2, 1776, was the first official act of the United Colonies that set them irrevocably on the road to independence. It was not surprising that it came from Lee's pen; as early as 1768 he proposed the idea of committees of correspondence among the colonies, and in 1774 he proposed that the colonies meet in what became the Continental Congress.

From the first, his eye was on independence. A wealthy Virginia planter whose ancestors had been granted extensive lands by King Charles II, Lee disdained the traditional aristocratic role and the aristocratic view. In the House of Burgesses he flatly denounced the practice of slavery. He saw independent America as "an asylum where the unhappy may find solace, and the persecuted repose."

In 1764, when news of the proposed Stamp Act reached Virginia, Lee was a member of the committee of the House of Burgesses that drew up an address to the King, an official protest against such a tax. After the tax was established, Lee organized the citizens of his county into the

Westmoreland Association, a group pledged to buy no British goods until the Stamp Act was repealed. At the First Continental Congress, Lee persuaded representatives from all the colonies to adopt this non-importation idea, leading to the formation of the Continental Association, which was one of the first steps toward union of the colonies.

Lee also proposed to the First Continental Congress that a militia be organized and armed; the year before the first shots were fired at Lexington; but this and other proposals of his were considered too radical, at the time. Three days after Lee introduced his resolution, in June of 1776, he was appointed by Congress to the committee responsible for drafting a declaration of independence, but he was called home when his wife fell ill, and his place was taken by his young protégée, Thomas Jefferson.

Thus Lee missed the chance to draft the document, though his influence greatly shaped it and he was able to return in time to sign it. He was elected President, serving from November 30, 1784 to November 22, 1785 when he was succeeded by the second administration of John Hancock. Elected to the Constitutional Convention, Lee refused to attend, but as a member of the Congress of the Confederation, he contributed to another great document, the Northwest Ordinance, which provided for the formation of new States from the Northwest Territory. When the completed Constitution was sent to the States for ratification, Lee opposed it as anti-democratic and anti-Christian.

However, as one of Virginia's first Senators, he helped assure passage of the amendments that, he felt, corrected many of the document's gravest faults, the Bill of Rights. He was the great uncle of Robert E. Lee and the scion of a great family tradition.

**Nathaniel Gorham (1738-1796)** Another self-made man, Gorham was one of the many successful Boston merchants who risked all he had for the cause of freedom. He was first elected to the Massachusetts General Court in 1771. His honesty and integrity won his acclaim and was thus among the first delegates chose to serve in the Continental Congress. He remained in public service throughout the war and into the Constitutional period, though his greatest contribution was his call for a stronger central

government. But even though he was an avid federalist, he did not believe that the union could; or even should, be maintained peaceably for more than a hundred years.

He was convinced that eventually, in order to avoid civil or cultural war, smaller regional interests should pursue an independent course. His support of a new constitution was rooted more in pragmatism than ideology. When John Hancock was unable to complete his second term as President, Gorham was elected to succeed him, serving from June 6, 1786 to February 1, 1787.

It was during this time that the Congress actually entertained the idea of asking Prince Henry, the brother of Frederick II of Prussia, and Bonnie Prince Charlie; the leader of the ill-fated Scottish Jacobite Rising and heir of the Stuart royal line, to consider the possibility of establishing a constitutional monarch in America. It was a plan that had much to recommend it but eventually the advocates of republicanism held the day. During the final years of his life, Gorham was concerned with several speculative land deals which nearly cost him his entire fortune.

**Arthur St. Clair (1734-1818)** Born and educated in Edinburgh, Scotland during the tumultuous days of the final Jacobite Rising and the Tartan Suppression, St. Clair was the only president of the United States born and bred on foreign soil.

Though most of his family and friends abandoned their devastated homeland in the years following the Battle of Culloden; after which nearly a third of the land was depopulated through emigration to America, he stayed behind to learn the ways of the hated Hanoverian English in the Royal Navy. His plan was to learn of the enemy's military might in order to fight another day.

During the global conflict of the Seven Years War, generally known as the French and Indian War, he was stationed in the American theater. Afterward, he decided to settle in Pennsylvania where many of his kin had established themselves. His civic-mindedness quickly became apparent: he helped to organize both the New Jersey and the Pennsylvania

militias, led the Continental Army's Canadian expedition, and was elected Congress. His long years of training in the enemy camp was finally paying off.

He was elected President in 1787; and he served from February 2 of that year until January 21 of the next. Following his term of duty in the highest office in the land, he became the first Governor of the Northwest Territory and the founder of Cincinnati. Though he briefly supported the idea of creating a constitutional monarchy under the Stuart's Bonnie Prince Charlie, he was a strident Anti-Federalist, believing that the proposed federal constitution would eventually allow for the intrusion of government into virtually every sphere and aspect of life.

He even predicted that under the vastly expanded centralized power of the state the taxing powers of bureaucrats and other unelected officials would eventually confiscate as much as a quarter of the income of the citizens—a notion that seemed laughable at the time but that has proven to be ominously modest in light of our current governmental leviathan.

St. Clair lived to see the hated English tyrants who destroyed his homeland defeated. But he despaired that his adopted home might actually create similar tyrannies and impose them upon themselves.

**Cyrus Griffin (1736-1796)** Like Peyton Randolph, he was trained in London's Inner Temple to be a lawyer, and thus was counted among his nation's legal elite. Like so many other Virginians, he was an anti-federalist, though he eventually accepted the new Constitution with the promise of the Bill of Rights as a hedge against the establishment of an American monarchy, which still had a good deal of currency.

The Articles of Confederation afforded such freedoms that he had become convinced that even with the incumbent loss of liberty, some new form of government would be required. A protégée of George Washington—having worked with him on several speculative land deals in the West; he was a reluctant supporter of the Constitutional ratifying process. It was during his term in the office of the Presidency, the last before the new national compact went into effect, that ratification was formalized and

finalized. He served as the nation's chief executive from January 22, 1788 until George Washington's inauguration on April 30, 1789.

**"Political freedom is an idea but not a fact..."  
(Protocol 1:6)**



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