

# BENEFIT CAPITAL COMPANIES INC.

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## FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS 2002<sup>©</sup> Robert W. Smiley, Jr., Chairman

To commemorate the continuing significance of the Fourth of July, here are four more reflections about the men who took risks that few had ever experienced by siding with the cause of liberty. These men put their lives, families, and futures on the line for nothing but the hope of bringing liberty to our land. In the words of Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, "Posterity who are to reap the blessings will scarcely be able to conceive the hardships and sufferings of their ancestors."

While enjoying the Independence Day holiday, please take a few minutes to silently thank these patriots. They deserve such consideration for the price they paid. And they deserve your appreciation.

On the back cover of his new book, *John Adams*, David McCullough penned:

"The American Revolution was made by British subjects, individual men and women who, by our modern sense of proportions, were amazingly few in number. The war they fought was the most important in our history, and as too few today seem to understand, it very quickly became a world war. But the revolution began well before the war. As John Adams famously observed, 'The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people.' And it changed the world.

There was no American nation, no army at the start, no sweeping popular support for rebellion, not much promise of success. No rebelling people had ever broken free from the grip of a colonial empire, and those we call patriots were also clearly traitors to the King. And so, as we must never forget, when they pledged 'their lives, their fortunes, their sacred honor,' it was not in a manner of speaking.

We call them the Founding Fathers, in tribute, but tend to see them as distant and a bit unreal, like figures in a costume pageant. Yet very real they were, real as all that stirred their 'hearts and minds,' and it has meaning in our time as never before.

With change accelerating all around, more and more we need understanding and appreciation of those principles upon which the republic was founded. What were those 'self-evident' truths that so many risked all for, fought for, suffered and died for? What was the source of their courage? Who were those people? I don't think we can ever know enough about them."

May you continue to enjoy the blessings of the liberty that these men helped to provide!

**FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS**  
**JULY 4, 2002**  
**INDEPENDENCE DAY**

**JOHN HANCOCK**

Born: January 12, 1737, Braintree, Massachusetts

Died: October 8, 1793

Orphaned as a child, John Hancock was adopted by his paternal uncle, a wealthy Boston merchant, whose patronage enabled him to receive a business education at Harvard College. The uncle died when Hancock was 27, leaving him a huge fortune, the largest estate in the province. This positioned him in a society of men of great political distinction, many of whom were loyalists. Hancock, however, soon became very involved in revolutionary politics and worked in concert with the Adamses and other prominent leaders in the New England republican movement. Early on, his sentiments were clearly for independence from Great Britain.

In 1770, a serious confrontation between British troops and local colonists resulted in the death of several citizens. Along with Samuel Adams, John Hancock gathered with citizens to seek redress and demand removal of the troops. In 1774, Hancock was elected to the Continental Congress and became its president in 1776. Despite a decree issued in England during early 1776 offering a handsome reward for the capture of Hancock and several leading signers of the Declaration of Independence, he was prepared to surrender his entire fortune should the liberties of his country require it. As president of the Continental Congress, John Hancock led the way to freedom for the colonies with his signature on the Declaration.

Hancock was subsequently elected to the governorship of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and served in that office until his death in 1793 at the age of 55.

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**JOSIAH BARTLETT**

Born: November 21, 1729, Amesbury, Massachusetts

Died: May 19, 1795

Josiah Bartlett began his career as a physician, applying unconventional medical remedies to treat his patients, often with very successful results. As the town physician of Kingston, New Hampshire, he soon was recognized as a gentleman who discharged his civil duties with confidence.

Also a skillful orator, Dr. Bartlett was elected to the legislature of the province of New Hampshire. A principled legislator, he was able to resist pressure from the Royal Governor to subject the people to British authority, and thus became an active advocate against British oppression. The political situation deteriorated to a point where the British dissolved the local government in New Hampshire. In 1775 as a member of the Continental Congress, Dr. Bartlett found that his and his colleagues' lives and fortunes were in great jeopardy as they voted on the Declaration of Independence. He was the first after John Hancock to sign the Declaration and subsequently participated in the ratification of the Articles of Confederation.

Dr. Bartlett had no family. His dealings with all men were marked by a scrupulous justice, which he sustained with eminence throughout his life. In 1793, he was elected first governor of New Hampshire, a post that he retained until his death on May 19, 1795, at the age of 65.

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## **MATTHEW THORNTON**

Born: circa 1714, Ireland

Died: June 24, 1803

Matthew Thornton received an academic education in Massachusetts in medical studies and soon became distinguished both as a physician and surgeon. In 1745, he was appointed surgeon to the New Hampshire troops, with 500 men under his care. Later, he was commissioned as colonel of the militia. When the political crisis escalated and the Royal Governor fled the New Hampshire province, Colonel Thornton renounced the British Government and sided with the cause of liberty. Years later, after dissolution of the Royal Government, he was asked to draft a plan of government for New Hampshire. His plan was adopted immediately and became the first constitution for that state.

In 1775, Thornton was chosen as a delegate to the Continental Congress, too late to participate in the debates over independence, but in time to sign the Declaration on behalf of New Hampshire. During this same year, he was selected as the first president of the New Hampshire House of Representatives and as a justice of the superior court.

Due to poor health, he declined to attend Congress in 1777, devoting himself instead to state duties and authoring political essays for newspapers. In addition to being a skilled surgeon and sustaining his other professional abilities, Dr. Thornton was known for a notorious sense of humor. He died in 1803 at the age of 89.

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## **WILLIAM WHIPPLE**

Born: January 14, 1730, Kittery, Maine

Died: November 28, 1785

Born with an adventurous spirit to a family of shipbuilders, William Whipple went off to sea in his teens to seek his fortune. Once he established himself as a successful trade merchant, calls to public duty began almost immediately. Whipple was elected to several local offices and became involved in the Patriot movement.

In 1775, Whipple was elected to represent his town at the Provincial Congress. The following year, New Hampshire dissolved the Royal Government and reorganized with a House of Representatives and an Executive Council. Honest and well-respected, Whipple was elected to the Continental Congress, where he served through 1779. In 1777, he was made Brigadier General of the New Hampshire Militia, leading his men in the successful expedition against General Burgoyne at the battles of Stillwater and Saratoga.

After the war, Whipple was appointed an associate justice of the superior court of New Hampshire. Plagued by war injuries and complications from a leg amputation, he suffered declining health and died at the age of 55.