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FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS 2007[©]

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. We are now in the eighth year of commemorating our nation's birthday by honoring these dedicated and brave men who devoted their lives and fortunes to create our United States of America. It is a time to appreciate them, and their 52 fellow signers of the Declaration of Independence, more than ever, and to dedicate ourselves to preserving the incredible constitutional republic that they prepared the way for and brought into being. Can we preserve it?

At a time when the survival of this nation is perhaps more under threat than it ever has been—targeted for destruction by forces that do not respect and value their own lives, and so cannot be dealt with as in the days when we dealt with enemies who did, forces that may not be recognized by enough of those who can save our country while there is still time for them to do it. Can we preserve it?

This year's four signers from the elite group of signatories of the Declaration of Independence were all from the State of Connecticut. All committed their sacred honor to it; some went on to take part in formulating the new government. Should we not again give more than silent thanks to these men who led us from domination to freedom, and who began the framework of government that has allowed us to remain free and prosper? Will we remain free and continue to prosper? We are privileged to live in the nation that is the greatest force for good on the face of the earth. We must neither forget our history nor fail to bravely secure that enduring freedom for those who come after us. Will we be able to do that—will we do that?

Please enjoy the enclosed reflections on our four Founding Fathers from Connecticut and, as you enjoy your Fourth of July Holiday 2007, remember and honor them with gratitude. And please enjoy our prior years' Fourth of July Reflections as well, which are now on our website. <http://benefitcapital.com/4threflections>

Samuel Huntington

Born: July 16, 1731*–Windham (now Scotland), Connecticut

Died: January 5, 1796 – Norwich, Connecticut

Samuel Huntington was born the fourth of ten children and the eldest of several sons of Nathaniel Huntington, a farmer descended from early Colonial settlers, and his wife Mehetabel. Lacking formal education because he was needed to toil as a plough boy on the family farm, Huntington accomplished his substantial education essentially on his own. By age 22, he found that, more than farming and more than gospel ministry, which became the path of some of his brothers, his interest lay in the area of law. Unable to afford tuition, he pursued his legal studies independently while apprenticed to a cooper and aided by the loan of books from the library of a local lawyer. He simply read every book on law he could come by. He was admitted to the Bar of Connecticut at the age of only 23.

By 1760 Huntington had relocated his legal office, originally established in his home town, to Norwich, where there was a larger potential client base, and it was not long before his legal knowledge, total reliability, integrity and common sense brought him to prominence in his profession. And soon his career in public service began, service that continued throughout almost all of his life. Initially, in 1764 he was seated in Connecticut's General Assembly, representing Norwich. A year later he became King's Attorney, then in 1774 an Associate Judge in the Superior Court. By this time he had become active with the Sons of Liberty, colonists who had joined together in the protest against the British impositions on American economic freedom, and, soon after, an Assistant in the Council of Connecticut. By now, Huntington's firm opposition to the Coercive Acts (the Restraining Acts) of the British Parliament and his frequent, strong expression of his opinions had gained him notice. In October 1775 the General Assembly of Connecticut appointed him to represent the colony in the Continental Congress, where the following July he voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence and affixed his signature.

Throughout his life Huntington was devoted to his Christian faith and lived a simple personal life. His ascent to high positions in public service are attributable to no privileged beginnings, no patronage—simply to his own character, intelligence, hard work, faith and perseverance. His marriage at age 30 to Martha Devotion, daughter of a local minister, produced no children, but he adopted two of his brother Joseph's children, and one of them later became governor of Ohio.

Huntington was appointed President of the Continental Congress in 1779, succeeding John Jay, and found many opportunities to demonstrate his firm and fervent leadership through the military reverses and extreme financial difficulties of the continuing War for Independence. During this time he was instrumental in bringing the States to complete and then unanimously ratify the Articles of Confederation, something his three predecessor Continental Congress Presidents, Hancock, Laurens and Jay, had not been able to do.

In 1781, Huntington was determined to be eligible to serve one year as the first President of the United States under the Articles, and he agreed and accepted the unanimous call to serve as *President of the United States in Congress Assembled* (he was never known as *the* "President of the United States," as this title was not recognized until 1787).

Huntington gave up his membership in the Continental Congress in 1781 due to ill health. His previous positions as Superior Court Associate Judge and Assistant in the Council of Connecticut had been kept vacant, and now he resumed them. Popular demand led to him being re-elected to Congress in 1782, but he was absent for a year, and did not resume his seat in Congress until July 1783. Just four months later he retired, returning to Connecticut to head the Superior Court. In 1785 he was elected Lieutenant Governor, and a year later became Governor, presiding in 1788 over the Connecticut Convention called to ratify the United States Constitution. He remained in that office until his death on January 5, 1796, at age 64, having been preceded in death by his wife two years earlier.

[*Please note that variations in birthdates for many of the Founders are due to calendar changes during this era involving a switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar.]

Roger Sherman
Born: April 30, 1721 – Newton, Massachusetts
Died: July 23, 1793 – New Haven, Connecticut

Roger Sherman was another of the Declaration signers born the son of a farmer, in this case William Sherman, who was descended from ancestors from Dedham, England, who had been in the New World for close to 100 years. Like Samuel Huntington, a fellow signatory, Sherman was predominantly self-educated, since his family could not afford much of a formal education for him. In his youth he worked on the family farm and learned to be a cobbler. A voracious reader, he devoured the printed word every moment available when he was not working and was even known to be reading with a book on his bench as he was working on shoes. The books came from his father's library and, as with Samuel Huntington, the library of a local minister. Sherman shouldered the burden of providing for the care and financial support of the family following the death of his father in 1741, when Roger was yet only 19. This responsibility he carried out dutifully and with good nature, and he helped two of his younger brothers get the liberal education that he denied himself.

Initially, at age 22, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker, and in June 1743 he sold the family farm and moved the family to New Milford, Connecticut, where he first went into business as a shoemaker, but soon became a country merchant in partnership with his older brother, who had moved there long before. Roger's self-education continued, and he was noted as being particularly skilled in mathematics. This led to his appointment as County Surveyor in 1745, a mere two years after the relocation to New Milford. He had also become learned in astronomy, and within three years was supplying the astronomical calculations for an almanac published in New York, something that continued for several years, and he himself published a popular almanac from 1750 to 1761. During this time he was also spending many hours studying law, and, encouraged by a supportive local lawyer, he was admitted to the bar in 1754, even though he had no formal legal education. New Milford elected him their Representative in the General Assembly of Connecticut the following year, when he was also appointed a Justice of the Peace. In 1759 he became one of the Judges of Common Pleas in Litchfield County.

Sherman fathered 15 children by his two wives, seven during his marriage to Elizabeth Hartwell from 1749 until her death in childbirth in 1760. In 1761, he moved to

New Haven, where he managed two stores, and another in Wallingford. He became associated with and a benefactor of Yale College and was its Treasurer for many years. In 1763, he married Rebecca Prescott, and subsequently they had eight children. In the meanwhile his political career was on the ascent. Sherman became an Associate Judge of the Connecticut Superior Court and a Representative in both houses of the Colonial Assembly. His Puritan faith and general opposition to extremism did not keep him from devoting himself wholeheartedly to the patriot cause. While not an accomplished speaker, he was rewarded for his knowledge, judgment, integrity and devotion to duty with appointments to many important committees, most notably that, along with Adams, Franklin, Jefferson and Livingston (the "Committee of Five"), to prepare a draft of the Declaration of Independence. He served in Congress and on the Supreme Court of Connecticut during the War for Independence and in 1784 was elected New Haven's first Mayor.

During the Continental Congress of 1787 it was Sherman who put forth the plan for the people to be represented in the house of the legislature, the House of Representatives, with the states represented in another house, the Senate, with each state having a representative for every 30,000 residents, but every state, regardless of size, two senators.

At 66, he became a Connecticut Representative to the Constitutional Convention and in 1789 helped prepare the Bill of Rights. Thomas Jefferson described Roger Sherman as "a man who never said a foolish thing in his life." Sherman is the only American who signed the four great historical cornerstone documents: The Continental Association of 1774; the Declaration of Independence; the Articles of Confederation; and The United States Constitution.

Sherman was a man of faith and for many years a professor of religion. The career of Roger Sherman happily illustrates the vast possibilities of American citizenship. Beginning life under the heaviest disadvantages, he rose to a career of ever increasing usefulness, honor, and success. He died of typhoid fever in New Haven on July 23, 1793, at age 72, while serving as a United States Senator.

William Williams

Born: April 28, 1731 – Lebanon, Connecticut

Died: August 2, 1811 – Lebanon, Connecticut

William Williams, the son of Solomon Williams, a minister, continued theological studies following his graduation from Harvard College in 1754 and at first planned to become a minister, like his father and grandfather. But the coming year found him instead enlisted in the Continental Army, along with his uncle, Colonel Ephraim Williams, engaged in the French and Indian War fighting on the northern front. After returning home from the war, in which his uncle was killed, Williams went into business as a merchant, opening a successful store in Lebanon.

Williams' marriage in 1771 to Mary Trumbull, a daughter of the Governor, brought him into "one of the most prominent and influential families" of Connecticut. William and Mary had three children. During his life, he was Town Clerk for 45 years, and a representative in the Assembly (and, for many years, Speaker or Clerk of the House) for

over 50 years, where in the course of 90 sessions he missed no more than five other than during his service in the Continental Congress in 1776 and 1777, when he signed the Declaration of Independence.

But those two records of very long-term stable government service hardly tell his whole story. During his earlier military service Williams had become disgusted with the British commanders. This led to his conclusive realization that America would not realize its potential for prosperity and peace as long as the British ruled.

A member of the Council of Safety during the War for Independence, this very ardent man left his business and gave almost all he owned to the patriot cause. In addition, he went house to house seeking private donations as well as supplies for the Continental Army, and, of course continued to donate his own resources. Early in the Revolution he lost considerable sums in exchanging his own hard currency dollars for what turned out to be the worthless paper money of the new nation. Williams made many speeches to encourage greater enlistment. Further, he opened his home to soldiers marching to and from the army, and in 1781 he gave up his own home entirely to the officers of a detachment stationed for the winter in his town.

Williams was a delegate to the Connecticut State Convention of 1788, voted for the ratification of the Constitution, and was a member of the Governor's Council.

He died August 2, 1811, at age 80, his health having declined following the death of the older of his two sons.

Oliver Wolcott

Born: December 1, 1726 – Windsor, Connecticut

Died: December 1, 1797 – Farmington, Connecticut

Oliver Wolcott was born in Windsor, Connecticut, the youngest of 14 children of the Royal Governor Roger Wolcott. He was a descendant of Henry Wolcott, a man of considerable wealth, born in England in 1578, who had turned on the British government and moved his family to America in 1630. Oliver graduated from Yale College in 1747. Before graduating, he was commissioned by Governor Clinton of New York to raise a volunteer militia to assist in the French and Indian War, where he served on the northern frontier.

Following the disbanding of his regiment upon the peace treaty at Aix-la-Chapelle, Wolcott studied medicine back in Connecticut, though he never entered the profession. Instead, in 1751, he was appointed Sheriff of the newly created Litchfield County, serving in this capacity for about 20 years. Subsequently, he rejoined the militia and became a Brigadier General in the Connecticut Forces under the Continental Army.

Wolcott's appointment in 1774 as Assistant in the Council of the State of Connecticut, to which he was re-elected annually for 12 years, marked the beginning of his political career. He served also as Chief Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the county and Judge of the Probate Court for the District of Litchfield.

Following his forebears' independent bent, it is not surprising that Wolcott became a strong advocate of separation from England. Connecticut sent him to the Continental Congress in 1776, where he took part in the deliberations regarding the Declaration of Independence and voted for its adoption. He was not able to sign the Declaration until later, however, having returned home immediately after the adoption to take command of 14 regiments of the state militia raised for the defense of New York. Of note, in 1776, a gilded leaden statue of King George III that had been put up on New York City's Bowling Green in 1770 was taken down by Wolcott's daughters and their friends and made into cartridges for this militia.

Wolcott had also been appointed by the Continental Congress as Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In 1785 he became one of the Commissioners of Indian affairs who negotiated a treaty of peace with the Indians of the Six Nations.

Wolcott signed the Declaration following his return to Congress on October 1, 1776. He continued a life of public and military service. He was elected Governor of Connecticut in 1796 and was in that office when he passed away on his 71st birthday. He was survived by his wife of 40 years and a son.

Wolcott's son, Oliver Wolcott Jr., followed Alexander Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury under Washington and was elected Governor of Connecticut in 1817.