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FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS 2001[©]

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.

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.

Yes, these brief reflections may seem long, but the cost of a few minutes of reading is substantially less than the price these patriots paid for our own inherited liberty. Please take a few minutes, while enjoying the Fourth of July holiday, to silently thank these men. It's not too much to ask for the price they paid.

They deserve our appreciation.

FOURTH OF JULY REFLECTIONS
JULY 4, 2001
INDEPENDENCE DAY

LYMAN HALL

Born: April 12, 1724, Wallingford, Connecticut

Died: October 19, 1790

Following graduation in Medicine from Yale University, Lyman Hall became a popular community doctor of prominent social status. He bought land in Georgia, establishing a plantation there while practicing medicine. Hall was an active partisan in revolutionary politics, alienating the Royal Governor of Georgia, James Wright. In 1774, he secured election to the Continental Congress representing Georgia. When largely Loyalist Georgia did join the colonies, he signed the Declaration while he was involved in provisioning food and medicine for the Revolutionary Armies. When the war reached Savannah in 1778, Hall's entire estate and plantation were burned to the ground and he stood accused of high treason. He fled to Charleston, which was then also overtaken by the British. In 1782 he returned to Georgia to reclaim his land, was elected to the House of Assembly and subsequently elevated to the office of Governor. He served one more year as a judge, then returned to private life. Hall died in 1790 at the age of 66.

GEORGE WYTHE

Born: 1726, Elizabeth County, Virginia

Died: June 8, 1806

George Wythe was interested in an educational career. Although the son of a wealthy agricultural family, he did not have access to the family fortune and was unable to keep up with the fees in college. Still devoted to education, he managed to pursue the study of law in a private law office and was so successful that he was admitted to the bar in 1746 at the age of 20. He was elected to represent Williamsburg and traveled to England, where he served in the House of Burgesses until it was dissolved on the eve of the American Revolution. Finally wealthy after inheriting the family farm, Wythe became America's first Professor of Law, his students including Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, James Monroe and dozens of other distinguished public servants. After having been elected to attend the Continental Congress, he voted in favor of the Resolution and for the Declaration. George Wythe was a dedicated republican and a quiet abolitionist. He freed his slaves and made provisions for their support until they could earn a living for themselves. This practice ended in tragedy and cost Wythe his life. A disgruntled family member, on discovering that Wythe had conditionally willed part of the family property to his slaves, poisoned the slaves and incidentally murdered George Wythe in the process. He died at the age of 80.

THOMAS NELSON, JR.

Born: December 26, 1738, Yorktown, Virginia

Died: January 4, 1789

Thomas Nelson, Jr., was born into the aristocratic society of Virginia, gained a private education in England, and graduated from Cambridge. After serving as a member of the House of Burgesses in 1774, he returned to Virginia for an appointment as member of the Provincial Convention, where he created the Virginia Militia. As commander-in-chief, he was instrumental in fighting the British forces as they launched their aggressive campaign against the southern colonies. Among the most patriotic events that marked Thomas Nelson's life occurred the day he asked General George Washington to open fire on his own home in Yorktown, Virginia. The British had previously taken Nelson's home to use as a residence and as headquarters for their Virginia campaign. When Nelson and Washington made advances in the area Nelson ordered the General to use any means necessary to take out the British, applying the finishing stroke to the war. After a heroic and distinguished career, Nelson succumbed to an asthma attack at the age of 51. He was bankrupt at the time of his death.

ARTHUR MIDDLETON

Born: June 26, 1742, Charleston, South Carolina

Died: January 1, 1787

Owing to his father's influence and position as statesman, Arthur Middleton was educated in England, graduating from Cambridge. An accomplished scholar, he took his father's place at the Philadelphia Convention, was a delegate to the Continental Congress, and signed the Declaration in 1776. During 1779, the southern states became the principal theater of the war. Many plantations were wantonly plundered, the inhabitants ravaged by the invaders, and Charleston was overrun by the British. Middleton took an active role in the defense of his city. He was captured by the British and held prisoner for more than a year. During the Revolution, his estate was looted, his art collection seized, and most of his fortune destroyed. Luckily, his home was not razed and his family escaped with their lives. After he was released from prison, he declined a seat in Congress, preferring instead the pleasures of private life. He died January 1, 1787, of an intermittent fever, at the age of 45.