

These are the men who represented North Carolina in signing the Declaration of Independence. They pledged their honor ... and their fortunes.

WILLIAM HOOPER was born on June 28, 1742 in Boston. His father, a Scotch Congregationalist minister, wanted him to be a man of the cloth. However, Hooper chose law. He graduated from Harvard College in 1760, and moved to Wilmington, N.C., after he passed his bar examination. He was so popular that in 1770 he was appointed deputy attorney general for the Colony of North Carolina. In 1773 he was elected to the colonial legislature, followed in 1774 by his election to the Continental Congress.

In the spring of 1776, Hooper's private business so greatly needed his attention in North Carolina, that he did not attend congress. He returned in time to cast his vote for and sign the Declaration of Independence. On December 20, 1776, he was elected a delegate to Congress for the third time. However, the situation at home in North Carolina made it impossible for him to spend more time away in Philadelphia. Accordingly, in February 1777, he resigned his seat in Congress.

Hooper continued his law practice and remained for a while on the North Carolina state legislature. During the Revolutionary War, the British tried, but were unable to capture Hooper or harm his family. They did in vindictiveness, however, torch his estate and leave his property completely devastated when they captured Wilmington. Hooper moved to Hillsboro where he remained to some extent in public life as a state legislator, but never regained his early prominence.

Like many other patriots, he did not allow himself to wallow in his misery. While to others his prospects appeared doubtful, he would always point to some brighter spots on the canvas, and he focused on these.

In 1787 Hooper's health became considerably impaired. He gradually relaxed from public and professional efforts. Hooper died in Hillsboro on Oct. 14, 1790 at the age of 48.



JOSEPH HEWES was born in 1730 in Kingston, N.J. His parents, Quaker by faith, were Connecticut farmers who moved to New Jersey in search of a more quiet and secure life away from marauding Indians and free of religious prejudices.

Hewes graduated from Princeton College and moved to Philadelphia, where he became an active and prosperous merchant. At the age of 30, he moved to North Carolina and settled in the village of Edenton, where he became a ship owner and a merchant. It was in Edenton that he met John Paul Jones, whom he helped to get his first command in the Navy. He was a man of integrity and honor, acquiring the confidence and esteem of the people and they elected him to represent them in the colonial provincial legislature.

In 1774, he was elected to represent North Carolina in the Continental Congress. In the beginning of 1775, the Society of Friends (the Quakers), to which he and his family belonged, held a general convention denouncing the proceedings of Congress. Hewes severed his connection with the Society and became a promoter of war against Britain.

Hewes was virtually the first secretary of the navy. John Adams, who was especially fond of

him, would often boast that he and Hewes "laid the foundation, the cornerstone of the American Navy."

The last time he appeared in Congress was on Oct, 29, 1779, after which a lingering illness confined him to his bed, and on Nov. 10, 1779, he died.



JOHN PENN was born on May 17, 1741 in Caroline County, Virginia. Penn received little formal education, but was urged to study law. Penn studied hungrily and remarkably passed the bar examination at Virginia at the age of 21.

Penn was unable to forge a rewarding practice in Virginia so he moved to Williamsboro, N.C. There, he displayed great ability and eloquence, and his practice flourished, as did his interest in politics. He soon became a leader in his community. He was elected to the provincial legislature in 1775 and to the Second Continental Congress.

After signing the Declaration, Penn returned home and was chosen at once to occupy an important position on the North Carolina board of war. His major task was to keep the militia well supplied. His dedicated efforts helped the Americans force Lord Cornwallis into retreat before the end of 1780.

In March of 1784, he was appointed receiver of taxes for North Carolina, but he resigned that office the following April.

Penn afterward resumed his life as a private citizen and continued to practice law. He died on Sept. 14, 1788.

The Liberty Day Story

Liberty Day began as an idea of the Lions Club of Denver. Teachers had a problem: civics had been made voluntary, decreasing the number of available civics books. But at the same time, many American history textbooks appeared without the Declaration of Independence or the U.S. Constitution printed in the back — takes up too much room in the book, teachers were told.

But how could kids be taught about those documents without ever seeing the words?

Private donations were collected for a booklet containing the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, for free distribution. Teachers were grateful, but had another problem. They teach around themes, they said, and the appropriate theme day for instruction about those documents is July 4, a day most students are not in school. They needed a day during the school year to focus upon those documents and our nation's heritage.

So a theme day was created — and a contest named it Liberty Day.

In the first year, Liberty Day was celebrated on Sept. 17, the day the Constitution was signed. Too close to the beginning of the school year, teachers decided.

Then it was suggested that Liberty Day be celebrated on Dec. 15, the day the Bill of Rights was ratified. Too close to Christmas, teachers decided.

Then they suggested that some time in March would be best for the school calendar — and the birthday of James Madison, “father of the Constitution,” just happens to be March 16. So Liberty Day became officially celebrated on March 16 or the closest school day to March 16.

James Madison, whose birth is celebrated on Liberty Day, was a remarkable man who ...

- Helped write the Virginia Plan, the basis of discussion for the creation of the U.S. Constitution

- Kept detailed notes of those debates in the Constitutional Convention of 1787

- Wrote many of the articles in support of that new Constitution, became known as the Federalist Papers

- Introduced the Bill of Rights to the House of Representatives in 1789 as a member of the first Congress

- Served as secretary of state under President Thomas Jefferson 1801-1809

- Led the nation as president 1809-1817



Lions Clubs of North Carolina

The Lions Clubs of North Carolina are part of the world's largest service club association, Lions Clubs International, which has 1.4 million members in more than 44,500 clubs in approximately 185 countries and geographical areas.



Lions are men and women who volunteer their time to humanitarian causes.

Founded in 1917, the Lion motto is “We Serve,” and Lions do, cutting across all national, racial and cultural

boundaries. Liberty Day is the latest Lions' service project. Other activities include sight conservation and work with the visually impaired, youth programs including drug-abuse education and prevention, diabetes detection and research and work for international cooperation and understanding.



Liberty Day

Liberty Day is a national celebration originated by Lions to call attention to the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. Many students lack a basic understanding of America's fundamental liberties and the role elected officials play in maintaining those liberties. Lions are committed to making sure that the basic liberties ensured by America's founding documents are not forgotten. Events are scheduled during the week of March 16 with the cooperation of elected government representatives and school superintendents and teachers.



Lions Clubs
of North Carolina

For more information, check the Internet at www.libertyday.org or contact Lion Ann of the Shallotte Lions Club at (910) 579-4849