

# People to Know / Vocabulary

Lessons 8, 9, & 10

## As You Read

Who:

- *What did this person do for a living?*
- *Where are they from?*

Importance:

- *What did this person accomplish that made a difference then and/or now?*
- *How did they affect others then and/or now?*

## Alexander Hamilton

Alexander Hamilton (1755/57-1804) served as George Washington's chief secretary during the Revolutionary War. After the war, Hamilton opened a law office in New York City.

In 1787, Hamilton attended the Constitutional Convention and wrote several essays to convince Americans to support the new Constitution. These essays became part of the Federalist Papers.

President Washington appointed Hamilton to become Secretary of the Treasury in 1789. Hamilton started a national bank to support business and pay the government debts. Later, political differences with Thomas Jefferson and James Madison led Hamilton to create the Federalist Party—one of the first political parties in America.

## James Madison

James Madison (1751-1836) was born in Virginia and became one of the great thinkers of his time. He studied ancient languages,

science, and philosophy at school.

Madison determined that the nation needed a new government. At the Constitutional Convention, he presented the Virginia Plan to replace the Articles of Confederation. With some changes, the Virginia Plan became the model for the Constitution of the United States. Madison wrote several essays—part of the Federalist Papers—supporting the Constitution.

To guarantee the support of some states, Madison agreed to write a Bill of Rights, made up of ten amendments, guaranteeing the rights of United States citizens. Madison is often called the Father of the Constitution.

## George Mason

George Mason (1725-1792) was born in Fairfax County, Virginia. Although highly intelligent, he was equally lazy. He studied law privately and became a politician.

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Mason spoke frequently. He opposed a strong federal government fearing that it would control the states. He also insisted a bill of rights be attached to the Constitution; he even offered to write it. Although a slaveholder, he disliked slavery and wanted to end the slave trade immediately. He failed to get any of his demands passed. Therefore, he refused to sign the Constitution and actively worked with other

Antifederalists to defeat its ratification.

## Daniel Shays

Daniel Shays (1747-1825) was born in Massachusetts to poor Irish immigrants. Shays served in the Massachusetts militia and saw fighting in the Revolutionary War where he was badly wounded.

By 1786, the American economy had crashed and farmers could not pay their bills. Shays led a rebellion to close down the courts that were taking farmers' land. Massachusetts called out the state militia and put down the rebellion. Shays fled to Canada but eventually returned. Shays received a pardon.

This rebellion scared many Americans, including George Washington and James Madison. The national government under the Articles did nothing to stop the rebellion and had little power to improve conditions. Many began to call for a convention to fix the Articles of Confederation.

## Roger Sherman

Roger Sherman (1721-1793) was born in Newton, Massachusetts, and worked as a shoe cobbler for his father before becoming a lawyer in 1754.

At the Constitutional Convention in 1787, he offered the Connecticut Compromise or Great Compromise. This allowed the population of each state to determine the number of representatives in the House, thus favoring large states. Each

state received two representatives in the Senate, thus favoring the small states. When the free and slave states argued over whether slaves should be counted in the population, Sherman and James Wilson presented the Three-fifths Compromise. Five slaves would count as three white people for the purpose of counting the population of each state to determine the number of representatives each state received in the House.

### **James Wilson**

James Wilson (1742-1798) became one of the finest lawyers in Pennsylvania and served in the Continental Congress from 1775-1777.

Wilson attended the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Most considered him one of the brightest people in attendance. Wilson introduced the Electoral College where each state would elect electors to go to Washington D.C. and cast votes for a president. In the beginning most state legislatures voted for the electors, but by the late 1820s, eligible citizens in most states voted for the electors.

Wilson, along with Roger Sherman, introduced the Three-fifths Compromise settling a dispute on how to count slaves in the South for representation in Congress.