



Constitution Compendium

Constitution/Crossing Connections

Six signers of the U.S. Constitution participated in what has come to be known as the “Ten Crucial Days” of the Revolutionary War.

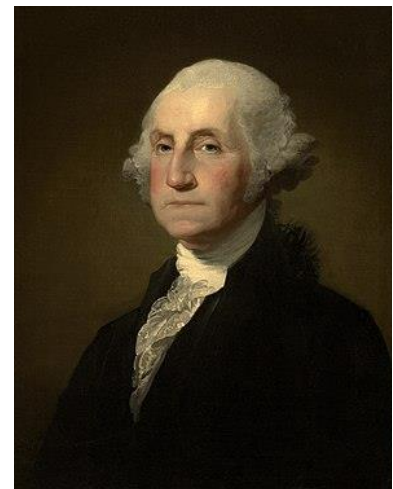
The ten days began with General George Washington’s famous crossing of the Delaware River on Christmas 1776 and continued through January 3, 1777. During this time, Washington’s troops participated in and won the First and Second Battles of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton.

These victories turned the tide of the Revolutionary War and gave the Continental troops the hope and courage to continue their fight for freedom.

The Washington Crossing Historic Park preserves and commemorates the area on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River from which Washington launched his Christmas 1776 crossing. For a description of what happened on each of the “Ten Crucial Days,” visit <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/cross-with-us/ten-crucial-days/>.

The six signers who participated in the Crossing or were directly connected to events during the “Ten Crucial Days” were:

George Washington
Thomas FitzSimons
Nicholas Gilman Jr.
Alexander Hamilton
Thomas Mifflin
Robert Morris Jr.



Gilbert Stuart. George Washington. Copy of incomplete Athaeneum portrait, 1803. Clark Art Institute.

George Washington

10 Crucial Days Connection

- Named Commander in Chief of Continental Army on June 14, 1775.
- On December 25, 1776, he wrote a note dated “McConkey’s Ferry 25th December 1776 Six o’clock pm,” in which he stated his intent to cross the Delaware River that night.



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- Crossed the Delaware River with 2400 men in middle of a Nor'Easter and led them on a nine-mile march to Trenton, defeating 1500 Hessians at the First Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776.
- Led subsequent wins at Second Battle of Trenton on January 2, 1777, and Battle of Princeton on January 3, 1777.
 - ◊ Cousin Captain William Washington recovered from injuries suffered at the First Battle of Trenton at Thompson-Neely House (now part of Washington Crossing Historic Park) in December 1776-January 1777.

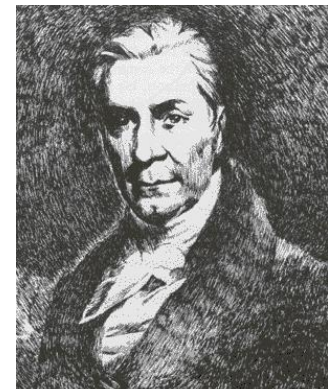
Constitution Connection

- Arrived in Philadelphia for what became the Constitutional Convention on May 9, 1787.
- Benjamin Franklin nominated him to preside over the convention and he was unanimously elected to serve as president general.
- Signed the U.S. Constitution as “President [of Convention] and deputy from Virginia” September 17, 1787.
- Elected first president of the United States, a position created by the U.S. Constitution.

Thomas FitzSimons

10 Crucial Days Connection

- Member of the Philadelphia Associators and part of Cadwalader’s brigade that was unable to cross on December 25 but was in area in weeks leading up to Crossing.
- Martin I. J. Griffin’s *Thomas FitzSimons, Pennsylvania’s Catholic Signer of the Constitution*:
 - ◊ Griffin, 56 – “On December 5th [1776], Captain FitzSimons with his company left Philadelphia for Trenton. They went by schooner to Bristol and marched from there to Trenton, getting to that place that night. On the 7th they retreated across the Delaware, as Howe’s advance was near at hand. The next day (Sunday) the company marched



“Thomas FitzSimons 2”: Marshall Williams. Pen and Ink Drawing. Thomas FitzSimons. After an oil c. 1802 by Gilbert Stuart. US Army Center of Military History. *Soldier-Statesmen of the Constitution*.



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a mile from shore and pitched tents. Sergeant William Young, whose diary, now in possession of the Pennsylvania Historical Society, gives the details I am repeating, says, under this date, of Captain FitzSimons: "Our captain is very kind to our men'."

- Company marched from Trenton to Dunk's Ferry and Neshaminy Ferry, then Bristol.
 - ◊ Griffin, 57 – "They took up 'march forward' again, and at nine o'clock on Christmas night were at Dunk's Ferry; but on account of the ice on Jersey shore they could not land the great guns, and so crossed back again to the Pennsylvania shore amid 'rain and snow and very cold' and 'our men came home very wet and cold,' records the Sergeant. It was on that night, you remember, that Washington crossed at McKonkey's or Patrick Colvin's Ferry."

Constitution Connection

- Pennsylvania Delegate to 1787 Constitutional Convention, signed U.S. Constitution.
- One of two Catholic signers, along with Daniel Carroll of Maryland.
- Dr. Benjamin Rush was a friend and wrote to FitzSimons encouraging him and the other PA delegates to send an invitation to Dr. Benjamin Franklin.

Nicholas Gilman Jr.

10 Crucial Days Connection

- On November 6, 1776, Gilman was appointed adjutant, or administrative officer, of the 3rd New Hampshire Regiment. That unit was part of St. Clair's Brigade prior to the Attack on Trenton, December 22, 1776. Multiple sources note that the 3rd New Hampshire Regiment was at Trenton/Princeton.
- As Adjutant, Gilman might have been back in New Hampshire recruiting, gathering supplies, etc. Even so, it is plausible that Gilman crossed.



Constitution Connection

- New Hampshire delegate to Constitutional Convention
- Arrived well after proceedings were under way, but quickly joined in debates and helped hammer out compromises needed to create final document
- Signed U.S. Constitution

"Nicholas Gilman": Albert Rosenthal. Nicholas Gilman. US Army Center of Military History. Soldier-Statesmen of the Constitution.



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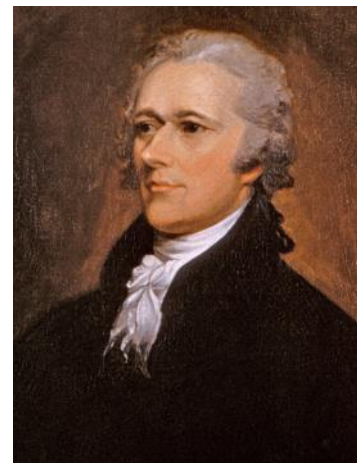
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Alexander Hamilton

10 Crucial Days Connection

- In 1776: 19-year-old captain of a NY Artillery Unit.
- Crossed the Delaware River with George Washington on December 25, 1776, and participated in the First Battle of Trenton on December 26 and the Second Battle of Trenton on January 2, 1777.
- During the Battle of Princeton, while Washington and Brigadier General Hugh Mercer fought at the William Clarke Farm, Hamilton's artillery unit was in the main town of Princeton, NJ, firing at what is now the core of Princeton University, Nassau Hall.
- Legend has it that one of Alexander Hamilton's cannon balls went into Nassau Hall and took off the head of the painting of King George II. Historians are not sure if this painting legend is true, but Hamilton's cannon balls definitely hit Nassau Hall.
- His second in command, Captain-Lieutenant James Moore passed away December 25, 1776, and is buried at the Thompson-Neely Farmstead (now part of Washington Crossing Historic Park).
- On March 6, 1777, Hamilton wrote to the Convention of the Representatives of the State of NY from Morristown, NJ: "His Excellency has been pleased to appoint me one of his aid-du-camps. [Referring to George Washington naming him secretary, a position Hamilton served in at Valley Forge]. Captain-Lieutenant James Moore, a promising officer, and who did credit to the state he belonged, di[ed] the 25th of December, after a short but excruciating fit of illness"



John Trumbull. Alexander Hamilton, 1806.

Constitution Connection

- Chosen as NY delegate to 1787 Constitutional Convention, signed U.S. Constitution.
- Gave an infamous six-hour speech at the Constitutional Convention.
- Defended the U.S. Constitution in *The Federalist Papers*, a series of 85 essays written by Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison.
- First U.S. Secretary of Treasury.
- One of two members of cabinet, along with future Secretary of War Henry Knox, that crossed December 25, 1776.



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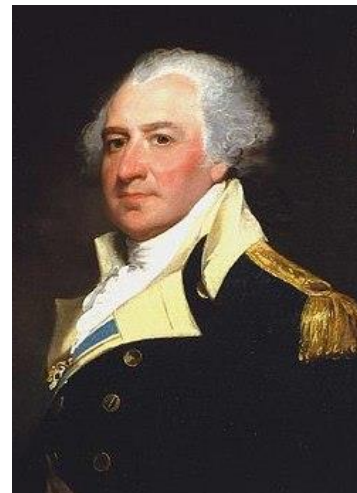
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Thomas Mifflin

10 Crucial Days Connection

- With Washington's Army during NY and NJ campaigns, including Battle of Brooklyn Heights/Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776.
- After the First Battle of Trenton, Mifflin's brigade was at Crosswicks, NJ. He came up with the idea of offering soldiers \$10 hard money if they reenlist for 6 weeks. He sold the idea to his Pennsylvania militia men as well as to New England units.
- Washington tried the same appeal with Greene and Sullivan's divisions, thus ensuring he still had an army when their enlistments came up at the end of the year.
- January 1, 1777: Mifflin's brigade was in Bordentown, NJ.
- Mifflin's brigade left Bordentown and served at the Second Battle of Trenton on January 2, 1777.
- Mifflin's brigade was part of the group that marched 15 miles to Princeton January 2-January 3, 1777. They served at the Battle of Princeton at the William Clarke Farm.
- Promoted to Major General as a result of his leadership during the 10 Crucial Days.
- As president of Continental Congress, Mifflin accepted General George Washington's resignation as commander in chief on December 23, 1783.



Unknown. Thomas Mifflin, c. 18th Century. George Washington's Mount Vernon, www.mountvernon.org

Constitution Connection

- Served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787. Signed the U.S. Constitution.

Robert Morris Jr.

10 Crucial Days Connection

- With the Continental Army in desperate straits, Morris was able to find wagons and teamsters in Philadelphia and deliver nearly 1000 muskets and 856 blankets. They arrived in the Continental camp Christmas Eve, 12/24/1776, the day before the Crossing.



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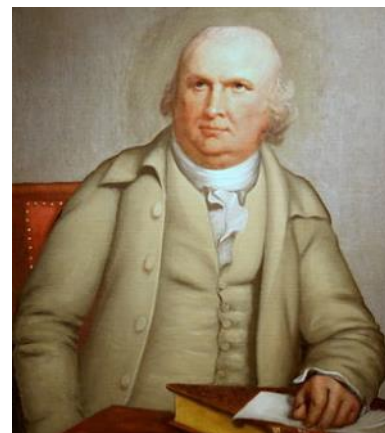


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- On the morning of December 25, 1776, Washington wrote Morris warning him that the British could be planning a Crossing and an attack on Philadelphia.
- On December 30, 1776, Washington wrote Morris from Trenton needing provisions, as he was having issues with Commissary Wharton. Morris called Commissary Wharton into his office, fixed the issues, and supplies again started flowing to Washington's army.
- On December 30, 1776, Washington wrote Morris asking for money. "Morris instantly scraped together a mixed purse of Dutch dollars, English shillings, and French crowns, mainly for espionage." Fischer, 279
- On December 31, 1776, Washington wrote Morris about the \$10 bounty he and Thomas Mifflin had promised men if they reenlisted for 6 weeks. Morris scoured Philadelphia for money, having already done the same the day before. He worked with a rich Quaker to come up with the money. According to legend, Morris literally dug up the cash from the Quaker's backyard.
- Known as the "Financier of the Revolution."



Robert Edge Pine. Robert Morris, c. 1785

Constitution Connection

- One of 6 men who signed both the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. The others were: George Clymer, Benjamin Franklin, George Read, James Wilson, and Roger Sherman.
- Washington's original choice for Secretary of the Treasury, Morris turned it down and encouraged Washington to appoint Alexander Hamilton instead.

Additional Resources

George Washington

Washington Crossing Historic Park. "Thompson-Neely House & Farmstead." <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/park/thompson-neely-house-farmstead-upper-park/>

Washington Crossing Historic Park. "The Crossing – History." <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/cross-with-us/history/>



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William M. Dwyer. *The Day is Ours: How a Ragged Rebel Army Stood the Storm and Saved the Revolution*. Viking. November 11, 1983.

David Hackett Fischer. *Washington's Crossing*. Oxford University Press. 2006.

William L. Kidder. *Ten Crucial Days: Washington's Vision for Victory Unfolds*. Knox Press. 2020.

North Callahan. *Henry Knox: General Washington's General*. Rinehart. January 1, 1958

Knox to Washington, January 14, 1787, George Washington's Papers

Washington to Knox, February 3, 1787, Fitzpatrick XXIX, 151

Knox to Washington, March 19, 1787, George Washington's Papers

Thomas FitzSimons

Martin I.J. Griffin. *Thomas FitzSimons, Pennsylvania's Catholic Signer of the Constitution*. From *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* Vol. 2 (1886-88) pg. 45-114

US Army Center of Military History. "Thomas FitzSimons Pennsylvania." *Soldier-Statesmen of the Constitution*. <https://history.army.mil/books/revwar/ss/fitzsimons.htm>

National Constitution Center. *Thomas FitzSimons*. <https://www.theconstitutional.com/blog/2019/12/31/thomas-fitzsimons-one-americas-founding-fathers>

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Nicholas Gilman Jr.

David Hackett Fischer. *Washington's Crossing*. Oxford University Press. 2006.

William L. Kidder. *Ten Crucial Days: Washington's Vision for Victory Unfolds*. Knox Press. 2020.

3rd New Hampshire Muster Roll 8 November 1776

US Army Center of Military History. "Nicholas Gilman New Hampshire." *Soldier-Statesmen of the Constitution*. <https://history.army.mil/books/RevWar/ss/gilman.htm>

National Constitution Center. "Nicholas Gilman." <https://constitutioncenter.org/learn/educational-resources/founding-fathers/new-hampshire#gilman>

Alexander Hamilton

Washington Crossing Historic Park. "Soldiers Graves." <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/park/soldiers-graves/>



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Washington Crossing Historic Park. “Thompson-Neely House & Farmstead.” <https://www.washingtoncrossingpark.org/park/thompson-neely-house-farmstead-upper-park/>

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