

but enemies before and around them. If we are beaten on the plains, we will retreat to the mountains, and defy them. Our resources will increase with our difficulties. Necessity will force us to exertion; until tired of combating in vain against a spirit which victory cannot subdue, your enemies will evacuate our soil, and your country retire, an immense loser from the contest. No, sir! We have made up our minds to bide the issue of the approaching struggle; and though much blood may be spilled, we have no doubt of our ultimate success.”

He was commissioned with Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Chase in February 1774 to seek aid from Canada on behalf of the struggling colonies.

He lived to be the last surviving signer of the Declaration of Independence. As has been well said of him; “Like a peaceful stream his days glided along, and continued to be lengthened out, till the generation of illustrious men with whom he acted on that memorable Fourth of July, 1776, had all descended to the tomb.” He died on November 14, 1832 in Baltimore, and is buried in his Doughoregan Manor Chapel at Ellicott City, Maryland.

In his last days he uttered these remarkable words: “I have lived to my ninety-sixth year; I have enjoyed continued health; I have been blessed with great wealth, property, and most of the good things which the world can bestow, public approbation, applause; but now what I look back on with the greatest satisfaction to myself is that I have practiced the duties of my religion.”

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Charles Carroll: A Catholic Patriot for American Liberty



Charles Carroll of Carrollton
The bronze statue located in the Hall of Columns in the Capitol Building.

When the American colonies decided to throw off the yoke of England, and rid themselves of the oppressions on the mother country, it was deemed necessary that a declaration, informing the world of the reasons why they took such a step, should be made, and Thomas Jefferson was appointed to prepare the manuscript. In conformity with his instructions, he presented to Congress that immortal document for their consideration. The reader of history does not need to be reminded of the importance of the act, which each of the members of this Congress

performed, in voting to declare themselves free, and in signing the Declaration of Independence. Not only did that act involve the colonies in a war, but it, at one stroke, placed them in an attitude of unmistakable hostility to England, and put in serious jeopardy all that they pledged to each other, their lives and their fortunes. They staked everything upon the result of that act, and with a heroism unsurpassed, virtually invited the enmity and vengeance of their King. Every one of them was necessarily a man of iron nerve, in thus braving the anger of their sovereign, and entering upon a war with one of the most powerful kingdoms, so ill prepared and deficient as the colonies were in everything except underlying patriotism and zeal, and unconquerable bravery.

And among the list of patriot heroes, whose names are attached to that "immortal document," none was more distinguished than that celebrated Catholic, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who in signing the Declaration of Independence, did not hesitate to stake upon the issue, more property than all of the other signers put together.

Charles was diminutive in physical stature, he was graceful in his movements and an accomplished horseman, and he had fine, regular features. Charles was often described as the richest man in the country, educated in his early years by Jesuits.

At ten years of age Charles Carroll was sent to school at the Jesuits at Bohemia on Harmon's Manor in Maryland, where one of his fellow students was his cousin, John

Carroll, afterwards Archbishop of Baltimore. The following year, 1748, they both crossed the ocean to the Jesuit College at St-Omer in French Flanders, where Charles remained six years. After a year at the college of the Jesuits at Reims he entered the College Louis le Grand at Paris. In 1753 Carroll went to Bourges to study civil law. He remained there for a year and then returned to Paris until 1757. In this year he took apartments in the Temple, London, where he studied law for several years. In later days he spoke in highest praise of the training he received at St-Omer and the College Louis le Grand. To the former he owed his deep conviction of religious truth, and to the latter his critical ability, his literary style, and the basis for the breadth of knowledge, which made him an invaluable citizen.

Carroll was a voice for independence in Maryland. In 1772 he engaged in a debate conducted through anonymous newspaper letters and maintained the right of the colonies to control their own taxation. As a Roman Catholic, he was barred from entering politics, practicing law, and voting. However, writing in the Maryland Gazette under the pseudonym "First Citizen," he became a prominent spokesman against the governor's proclamation increasing legal fees to state officers and Protestant clergy.

The reference to this patriot, and his family, by Lord Brougham says:

"His family was settled in Maryland ever since the reign of James II, and had during that period been possessed of the same

ample property, the largest in the union. It stood therefore at the head of the aristocracy of the country; was naturally in alliance with the government; could gain nothing, while it risked everything by a change of dynasty; and, therefore, according to all the rules, and the prejudices and their frailties which are commonly found guiding men in a crisis of affairs, Charles Carroll might have been expected to take a part against revolt, certainly never to join in promoting it. Such, however, was not this patriotic person. He was among the foremost to sign the celebrated Declaration of Independence. All who did so were believed to have devoted themselves and their families to the Furies. As he set his hand to the instrument, the whisper ran round the hall of Congress, 'There goes some millions of property!' And there being many of the same name, when they heard it, said: Nobody will know what Carroll it is,' as no one wrote more of his name, and one at his elbow remarked, addressing him: 'You'll get clear, there are several of that name, they will not know which to take.' 'Not so!' he replied; and instantly added his residence, 'of Carrollton.'"

Nor was this all that can be said of this remarkable man. In 1827 the editor of the then Philadelphia National Gazette published a biography of Mr. Carroll, which appeared in the American Quarterly Review; and in it he stated, that shortly before the revolutionary war, Mr. Carroll wrote to a member of parliament as follows: "Your thousands of soldiers may come, but they will be masters of the spot only on which they encamp. They will find naught