

## A Rebuttal to "The Price They Paid" Essays

These are Paul Harvey's words as he wrote them. He has been plagiarized by many folks since [Hildreth, Trumbore, and countless others who said it was anonymous]. These words have appeared in print and all across the web for years, and much of their rhetoric is simply not true. By using liberal quotes of Harvey's words, I hope it will illuminate that these words are as far from 'anonymous' as they are true.

There have been several other essays written since 1956 that echo the tone and many of the incorrect legends that Harvey fell prey to believing. I believe that the others were written independently because they have included other facts & legends, and left some of Harvey's more compelling ones out. I suspect that some pre-1956 source, a quick read, and with a reputation that did not incline any of these entertainers to fact-check, is lying out there waiting to be rediscovered.

The essay that I'm quoting appears as part of Paul Harvey's ***The Rest of the Story***, Hanover House, 1956. LOC Card #56-9395

In 1975 it was reprinted, with a short preface, in a booklet called ***Our Lives, Our Fortunes, Our Sacred Honor*** by Word Books, Waco Texas. [the copyright notice in that issue mentions an additional copyright date of 1969, as well as the 1956 & 1975 copyrights]

I will not include the entire essay, but only that which is either in error, or which appears to me to be a key to its, and all the other's, origins. I will use ellipses (.....) where there is a break what I am quoting. Since Harvey uses them frequently, I will include parens around my ellipses to prevent confusion. The Harvey text will be set in and in italics.

*The United states of America was born in 1776. But it was conceived 169*

*years before that.*

*(.....)*

*All others of the world's revolutions before and since were initiated by men who*

*had nothing to lose. Our founders had everything to lose... nothing to gain....*

*except one thing.....*

*Our Lives,*

*Our Fortunes,*

*Our Sacred Honor*

*(.....)*

*These were men of means, well educated.*

Most of the Signers were certainly men of means. Notably, though Sam Adams was so poor that the people he represented took up a collection to send him to Philadelphia in clothing befitting a representative of their town. Many of those well educated men were not educated by colleges, but on their own. Some acquired as many as three honorary degrees from leading universities without ever having gone beyond the most basic of formal education.

*Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists.*

*Eleven were merchants. Nine were farmers and owners of large plantations.*

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This part is a common tie between all the bogus essays. They all try to define the Signers so simply, and it just cannot be done. Dumas Malone, in his **\_Making of the Declaration of Independence\_** pp95 & 96, wrote; "They cannot be classified with precision on grounds of occupation, for this was not an age of specialization and occupations constantly overlapped."

Truer words were never spoken. Some, like Sam Adams, were singularly successful at being congressmen while not doing too well at their chosen 'occupation'. Many, like Nelson, were born into such wealth and standing, that their real calling was public life, and they hired folks to 'keep the books' at home while they dabbled in whatever struck their fancy. *Many* of these men had varied interests and were proficient at *many* trades.

Despite that, I felt compelled to make some attempt myself. Even though I have 13 men defined by only one occupation, and 2 as 'gentlemen', the remaining 41 who had a variety of occupations swelled the list to 141 entries long. The 'single occupation' men were lawyers (6), merchants (5) and 2 public servants that will likely go to either the 'agriculturist' or 'gentlemen' categories. The list is sure to get longer as I read more about each signer, but since I've finally gotten at least one entry for all of them, I thought I'd illustrate why I think the simple claim of "24 lawyers, 11 merchants, and 9 farmers" is both misleading and a clue to the source of all these inaccurate essays.

The longest category in my list is 'public service'. For this category, I only included those who held a public office prior to 1770. Many got involved in 1765, during the Stamp Act years. Others were 2nd or 3rd generation politicians.

Of the 44 who were 30 years old by 1770, I have 31 in my 'Public service' category so far.

First the lawyers. Some of the essays say '24[or 25] lawyers', and others say '24 lawyers and jurists'. There is a difference between an 18th century lawyer, and an 18th century jurist. There was no need to be a lawyer to be a jurist-- as several of the signers prove.[one even sat on the Supreme Court with no legal training]

My numbers so far;

22 lawyers

11 Judges & Justices

[28 were either lawyers or Judges or Justices before they signed]

Then the merchants. I count 18. Some had retired, but most of the retired merchants still received profits from their business.

The farmers were the toughest ones of all. The only one who I still might consider a farmer in the 20th century sense of the word would be John Hart and he wore several other hats as well..[Mill owner, politician, Justice]

Many of the signers were born into very wealthy families who owned huge estates which supported them. Others built these huge estates themselves. To call them farmers, is akin to calling Bill Gates a software salesman. It's accurate, but misleading.

I can't find a term that applies broadly enough to cover the southern planters like Braxton or Carroll [that isn't a man who plants cotton or rice-- he is a businessman who runs a business], and the northern aristocrats like Morris & Floyd, who essentially did the same thing & are likely counted as farmers in those essays.

Rather than resort to 'farmer', I've used 'agriculturists'. I didn't count those who were interested in farming as a hobby, but only those who derived a substantial income from their properties. [cattle, fruit, produce, lumber, 'renters', etc.] Of them, I counted 16.

This is my tally;

32 'public service' prior to 1770

22 lawyers

11 Judges & Justices

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[28 were either lawyers or Judges or Justices before they signed]

18 merchants

16 planters, farmers, agriculturists

6 academics

5 authors

4 surveyors

3 doctors

3 ministers.

2 "gentlemen"

There was also a brewer, a cooper, a couple inventors, a musician, a poet, a printer, a publicist, a couple scientists, a seaman, a shoemaker, and a [land?] speculator.

(.....)

*Fifty-six men placed their names beneath that pledge. Fifty-six men knew-when they signed-that they were risking everything.*

*They knew if they won this fight, the best they could expect would be years of hardship in a struggling nation. If they lost, they'd face a hangman's rope.*

(.....)

*Carter Braxton of Virginia, wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas. To pay his debts he lost his home and all his properties and died in rags.*

He may have died poor, I haven't located a good biography of him yet, or found his will. He died at his spacious estate, Chericoke, so I suspect 'died in rags' might be misleading.

He did lose his ships which were flying the British flag when the Revolution began. They weren't necessarily 'swept from the seas', but more likely retained by his former business partner, the British Government. He did suffer losses in property due to the Revolution. He recouped those losses though, after the Revolution, and his next big setback was 'businesses gone sour' around the end of the 1700's. Though a great Patriot and Statesman, his business practices have met with considerable criticism.

(....)

*Thomas McKean of Delaware was so harassed by the enemy that he was forced to move his family five times in five months. He served in Congress without pay, his family in poverty and in hiding.*

McKean [misspelled McKeam in so many copies floating around the net] was representing DE, but he was born in PA, and lived in Philadelphia. He held dual citizenship in the two colonies, and is the only representative to serve in congress throughout the entire war. [While holding positions of 'President of the State Of Delaware' for 3 years, president of congress for 1, and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania for several years along with other positions.]

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He put his name on a list of volunteers to lead militia troops. After the July votes, he headed off to Perth Amboy to take charge of A Battalion of Pennsylvania 'Associators'. He arrived back in Philadelphia after the Aug 2 'Signing', so his name was added much later. Probably shortly after Jan 1777.

*Vandals looted the properties of Ellery and Clymer and Hall and Gwinnett and Walton and Heyward and Rutledge and Middleton.*

This is a phrase most often repeated in many of the copy-cat essays. Many don't spell Ellery or Rutledge correctly. It is probably true that some of the properties of those men were vandalized. [one of Ellery's homes was burned]

The same can be said for many more of the Signers, and nearly all of the wealthy people in the war-torn areas of our country in those years. Both Armies, the British and the Americans, 'foraged' for food. If a property owner had food, or lumber or livestock or wagons or horses, any army passing through was likely to appropriate them for their use. The most spacious homes were commandeered for billeting soldiers and officers of both sides. Loyalists would vandalize the homes of their Patriot neighbors.

Notable among the homes which were in occupied territory, but were left with little or no damage are homes belonging to; Floyd, Lewis Morris, Hopkinson, Stockton, Middleton, Witherspoon, Hart, Nelson, Jefferson, Harrison, Heyward, both Adams's, Hancock, Rush, Huntington, Wilson, Robert Morris, and the Lee brothers.

*And Thomas Nelson, Jr., of Virginia, raised two million dollars on his own signature to provision our allies . . . the French fleet. After the war he personally paid back the loans, wiped out his entire estate. He was never reimbursed by his government.*

*In the final battle for Yorktown he, Nelson, urged General Washington to fire on his . . . Nelson's . . . own home, which was occupied by Cornwallis.*

*It was destroyed. He died bankrupt and was buried in an unmarked grave. Thomas Nelson, Jr., had pledged "his life, his fortune and his sacred honor."*

The \$2,000,000 figure is repeated often. That *might* be an accurate translation of 30,000 1780 American pounds to 1956 US dollars. 30,000 pounds is what Nelson tried to have reimbursed by the VA government after 1783. The VA government did refuse to pay back the loans, but his estate was never in any danger of being 'wiped out'.

In the battle of Yorktown, Nelson, as Governor of VA, and the head of the VA militia was in command of the American battery which was destroying the headquarters of Cornwallis in Yorktown. The home, however, was not his, but the home of his uncle and namesake, Thomas, The Secretary, Nelson.

Soon after that, Nelson was officer of the day and reviewing the French troops in the center of the American lines. It was on this day that legend says he offered 5 guineas to any *French* artillerist who could hit his home. [a prominent feature in Yorktown, even today]

The legend, where I've seen it repeated by respected authorities does not mention him seeing Cornwallis near it, and indications are that Cornwallis was holed up in a root cellar on his uncle's property. His home was damaged, though not beyond repair. It is a National Park site and is visited by thousands every year.

Nelson did pay back all the loans that he could during his lifetime, but all of VA's elite were suffering through a post-war recession. Cash was in short supply. He sold some of his properties in Europe before his death. When he died, though 'cash poor', he was still among the top ten largest landholders in VA. His will allowed for the selling of several properties in VA to raise cash to pay off the rest of his debts. After those debts were settled, the remaining *several* [9or 10] plantations were divided up among his family, a friend, and one of his slaves.

*The Hessians seized the home of Francis Hopkinson of New Jersey.*

The reason we know that Hessians occupied Hopkinson's home is that one of those Hessians borrowed a book from

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Hopkinson's personal library, left a message on the flyleaf, and had it returned to the family.

*Francis Lewis had his home and everything destroyed, his wife imprisoned. She died within a few months.*

Lewis's Long Island home was apparently destroyed. Probably some of his NY City properties were destroyed too. His business, turned over to his son but still a source of income, appeared to survive the war intact.

Mrs. Lewis refused the order given to all Long Islanders to leave Long Island. [Mr. Lewis was in Philadelphia attending to his duties in Congress] She was imprisoned, and later exchanged for the wives of two British officials who the Americans had captured.

Her health, though probably adversely affected by her imprisonment had been failing for years. She died about two years after her exchange in Philadelphia.

*Richard Stockton, who signed that Declaration, was captured and mistreated and his health broken to the extent that he died at fifty-one. His estate was pillaged.*

Stockton is alone in that he is the only one of the five Signers captured that was not a military prisoner of war. He spent a couple months in prison. His release is reported in various places as being obtained by an exchange, or by his signing of an oath to cease rebellious activities. About a year after his release he began fighting a lip cancer which took his life in two more years.

His estate, Morven, in Princeton, was pillaged by soldiers from both sides as they passed through. One of George Washington's letters asks American soldiers to return any of Stockton's letters or papers that they may have picked up.

*Thomas Heyward, Jr., was captured when Charleston fell.*

When Charleston fell, all of the officers of the Rebel Army were paroled. Shortly afterward, the British had second thoughts, and ordered them all rounded up. Heyward and Rutledge, and Middleton were all officers.

*John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside while she was dying. Their thirteen children fled in all directions for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves and returned home after the war to find his wife dead, his children gone, his properties gone; he died a few weeks later of exhaustion and a broken heart.*

Hart's wife died a month before the British invaded NJ. Their children were grown, there being only two who were still minors. The British occupied that part of NJ for less than 2 months.

After returning to his farm, Hart spent 2 more years serving in the NJ Provincial Assembly before taking a leave due to his kidney stones which claimed his life in 1779, nearly 2 1/2 years after his harrowing experiences in the woods.

*Lewis Morris saw his land destroyed, his family scattered.*

Morris' property was in one of those contested areas of Westchester County, NY. His son, Lewis Morris Jr., wrote to him in 1776;

"..... There is a regiment at Morrisania, and your own house is made a barrack of, .....and there are troops all about us which makes it impossible to prosecute the business of the farm and besides they press your horses; the two coaches horses were pressed this afternoon which Colonel Shee has returned, and I believe unless speedily secured your breeding mares will come next. . . . Your fat cattle are in the hands of the commissary.... Colonel Hand's regiment plunder every body in Westchester County indiscriminately, even yourself have not escaped. Montrasseurs Island they plundered and committed the most unwarrantable destruction upon it; fifty dozen of bottles were broke in the cellar, the paper tore from the rooms and every pane of glass broke to pieces....."

[Cited as '-MORRIS, "Letters," N. Y. Hist. Soc. Coll., VIII, 440-443' in Commager & Morris' "Spirit of Seventy-Six' p478]

Lewis Jr. was speaking of the American Army, and accurately predicted the fall of Morrissania [Morris' home] to the British in coming weeks.

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Morris' family was surely scattered. His children were mostly grown, and 3 of his sons served in the Continental Army. His wife, and I assume his younger children, went to live with friends when the *Continental Army* moved onto his property.

His wife later joined him in Philadelphia. After the war, they returned to Morrissania & rebuilt it to the magnificence which it shows to visitors today. He died there, with his family in 1798.

*Philip Livingston died within a few months from the hard ships of the war.*

Livingston died in York PA, June 12, 1778 of 'dropsy'. He was attending Congress, but took a months leave for his illness before he died.

*John Hancock history remembers best due to a quirk of fate rather than anything he stood for. That great, sweeping signature attesting to his vanity towers over the others. One of the wealthiest men in New England, he stood outside Boston one terrible night of the war and said, "Burn Boston, though it makes John Hancock a beggar, if the public good requires it."*

The legend goes that he used those words to affirm his agreement with those in the Committee of Safety who were suggesting burning Boston as a means of saving it from the British. [in 1775]

(.....)

*Of the fifty-six, few were long to survive.*

Nine died before the revolution was ended in 1783. Another twelve died in the next decade. Among them was an octogenarian, 2 septuarians, and none under 44. 19 yrs after signing, half were still alive. Most lived longer than their fathers had.

*Five were captured by the British and tortured before they died.*

Only one was captured because he signed. Richard Stockton was arrested by Loyalists and turned over to the British to be held in prison. The other four were prisoners of war.

There is no record of any Signer being tortured, or mistreated because they signed. The prisons on both sides were hell-holes.

*Twelve had their homes ... from Rhode Island to Charleston ... sacked, looted, occupied by the enemy, or burned.*

Here Harvey contradicts himself. Above he writes that three of the Georgian Signers' homes were looted, and here he implies that the looting, etc. stretched from Rhode Island to Charleston. Has he missed the Boston home of John Adams that was occupied, or the New Hampshire home of Bartlett which was burned by Loyalists in 1774?

I'll restate my thoughts from above. These homes were treated no differently than those of other wealthy Americans whose properties were in occupied territory. Both Armies took what they needed to fight a war.

*Two lost their sons in the army. One had two sons captured.*

I'll treat these two together because it is a puzzle I've tried to unravel for some time.

James Witherspoon was killed at the battle of Germantown.

Abraham Clark had two sons that were captured.

Historians are in agreement on those two facts. The second son that was killed remains a puzzle that no-one seems to be able

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to answer. I have two theories.

1. The second son referred to is the son of Henry Laurens. Laurens was a President of Congress during the war, though he was not a member of the 1776 Congress, so he did not sign. But his son was killed in a skirmish near Charleston. If the author meant to include Laurens, however, the number of 'captured' would rise to six, as Laurens himself was arrested on his way to Europe, and spent several months in the Tower of London.

2. Historians agree that Thomas and Aaron Clark, sons of Signer Abraham Clark, were POW's. Most accounts note that Captain Thomas was captured twice and escaped both times. What they aren't in agreement on is a young 19 yr. old Andrew Clark who died as a prisoner on the prison ship 'Jersey'. Even the Abraham Clark society cannot seem to either prove or disprove the connection to the Signer. But if we accept that the author meant the youngest Clark was killed, then he should have said 'one signer had three sons captured'.

3. A third possibility, and one I haven't been able to follow up on yet is John Morton.

I saw this posting on a genealogy mail list ;

"Martin's *History of Chester* (1850) indicates that John MORTON, son of John MORTON, Signer of the Declaration of Independence, died on board the prison ship Falmouth in New York Harbor, during the American Revolution."

I haven't seen it mentioned in the bios I've read about Morton-- but I haven't read a thorough biography and most bios pay little notice to the children of the Signers. The ones that do mention John Morton mention a son named John born about 1755, so he would have been the right age. The Falmouth was described in Barber's history of NY as a Hospital ship, though it made little difference in the mortality onboard.

A promising lead, but yet to be confirmed.

*Nine of the fifty-six died in the war, from its hardships or from its more merciful bullets.*

Nine died during the war. One died from a bullet; fired in a duel with a fellow officer. None died at the hands of the British, and none died due to 'hardships'. One was lost at sea.

It's easy enough to check to see who died before the war was over. Here they are, and, when available, a cause of death.

Morton, John, PA, died April 1777 aged 53 of ??? (K&BJ give no detail of how)[father died ae41]

Gwinnett, Button, GA, died May 16, 1777 aged 42, from wounds sustained in a duel.

Livingston, Philip, NY, died June 12, 1778 at 62, of "dropsy of the chest" [father died ae63]

Lynch, Thomas Jr., SC, died [probably] in 1779 ae30. Lost at sea. [father died ae49]

Hart, John, NJ, died May 11, 1779; aged 68[66?], of kidney stones [father died ae63]

Ross, George, PA, died July 14, 1779 aged 49, of gout [father died ae76]

Hewes, Joseph, NC, died Oct 10, 1779, aged 49, according to Bakeless of "overwork and irregular bachelor hours" [father died ae80-90]

Taylor, George, PA, Feb 23, 1781 at 65 yr. old

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Stockton, Richard, NJ, died Feb 28, 1781 at 50, of Cancer of the lip. [father died ae86]

*I don't know what impression you had of the men who met that hot summer in Philadelphia. But I think it is important that we remember this about them.*

*They were not poor men or wild-eyed pirates. They were men of means. Rich men, most of them, who enjoyed much ease and luxury in their personal living.*

Despite disagreeing with the overall tone of this essay, Harvey and I are nearly in agreement here. With the notable exception of Sam Adams, who was neither rich nor 'calm', and a few of the more radical members of that Congress, most of the Signers were respectable statesmen of great wealth.

*Not hungry men. Prosperous men. Wealthy landowners, substantially secure in their prosperity.*

*But they considered liberty-and this is as much as I shall say of it-they had learned that liberty-is so much more important than security-that they pledged their lives . . . their fortunes . . . and their sacred honor.*

Much has been written about the motivations of the Signers and the Founders in general. From my study, I believe that as a body they were putting their country above their own personal gains. There is no doubt that they risked their own lives & property along with that of their countrymen.

I'm not sure whether I admire more the representative that voted no, but signed the Declaration or the representative that personally felt it was a bad idea, but voted yes because his constituents had expressed their wishes that he support independence.

I admire the Congress at large for, when it was inevitable that the vote would pass, doing everything in their power to make a united front. Both the delegates who stayed home and the new appointees, who were unable to take part in much more than a vote that had already been decided, are a tribute to a body who put the country and their countrymen above their personal egos.

*And they fulfilled their pledge.*

*They paid the price.*

*And freedom was born.*

All of the Americans who lived in those times 'paid the price'. John Adams wrote years later that all through the Revolution he would have given anything to have things returned to the way they were. He wasn't lamenting his own losses. Any human who has ever seen the suffering of the soldiers and innocents in a war zone has to wonder if an armed conflict is ever a worthy price for change. But the clock can't be turned back. The deed was done. And from it a glorious country emerged.

\* \* \* \* \*

Questions, comments, corrections or additions are solicited. I am sure to have made some mistakes, or stated as fact something that is disputed. I am most interested in getting the stories right, not in proving any theory, or in making any point..

Contact me at [elbrecht@email.com](mailto:elbrecht@email.com)  
James Elbrecht June, 2000