# Roger Sherman Biography

## Roger Sherman

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# Contents

Roger Sherman Biography.....1

Contents.....2

Biography.....3

# Biography

Roger Sherman (1721-1793), American patriot, was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a formidable voice at the Constitutional Convention.

Roger Sherman was born of humble origins. As a youth, he worked as a cordwainer and cobbler on the family farm in Stoughton, Mass. In 1743 he moved to New Milford, Conn., where he was variously employed as a surveyor, storekeeper, almanac compiler, and lawyer. He also began his long career as a public official, serving as juryman, deacon, town clerk, school committeeman, justice of the peace, assemblyman, and commissary officer for the Connecticut militia. In 1761 he moved permanently to New Haven, where he continued his mercantile enterprises until 1772, when he retired to devote full time to public affairs. He served long terms as a member of the upper house of the Connecticut Legislature (1766-1785) and as a judge of the superior court (1766-1789), while also acting as treasurer of Yale College, from which he received an honorary master's degree in 1768.

As the Revolution approached, Sherman opposed the Stamp Act, supported the Sons of Liberty, enforced nonimportation agreements, and headed the New Haven Committee of Correspondence. He served in the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1781 and again in 1783-1784. He often counseled caution and moderation but without compromising American self-determination. He signed the Articles of Association of 1774, the Declaration of Independence (serving on its drafting committee as well), and the Articles of Confederation. After the war he returned to New Haven, where he was faced with severe financial reverses stemming from his support of the Revolution, the collapse of some of his businesses, and the demands of a large family (seven children by his first wife and eight by his second).

Though Sherman had consistently sought to strengthen the powers of Congress, he went to the Constitutional Convention of 1787 convinced that it would suffice to "patch up" the Articles of Confederation. He added constructively to debates, often leading the small-state opposition to the Pennsylvania-Virginia insistence on representation according to population. He also fought to uphold the supremacy of state legislatures. In the end, he helped devise the "Great Compromise," approved the Constitution, and defended it in the ratification debates. As an elder statesman, he served for 2 years in the first Federal House of Representatives and then for 2 years in the Senate.