

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## **Four Biographies**

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□ ***Oliver Ellsworth, Connecticut***

(Biography available through the EDSITEment-reviewed website Digital Classroom.)

Ellsworth attended Yale and the College of New Jersey (now known as Princeton) earning a degree in theology; however, he took up the study of law and was admitted to the bar four years later. His early years as a lawyer were lean. It is said he was too poor to afford a horse and that he took work chopping wood to supplement his income. Eventually he became prosperous. He served his county as state attorney and held a number of state offices including Representative to the Continental Congress. Ellsworth not only proposed the Great Compromise, but also entered an amendment that resulted in the term “United States” being used to refer to our nation during the convention. After the ratification of the Constitution (which he did not sign, though he did support), Ellsworth served as a senator from Connecticut and, later, Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

□ ***Alexander Hamilton, New York***

(Biography available through the EDSITEment-reviewed website Digital Classroom.)

While Hamilton would hardly be called a lesser figure by many scholars, he is probably little known to students, who may wonder what his picture is doing on a ten dollar bill. Born into poverty, Hamilton became wealthy through marriage. Though he had limited formal education, Hamilton wrote widely read pamphlets as a young man and eventually entered college; his studies were interrupted by the War for Independence. During that conflict, Hamilton served as Washington’s aide-de-camp. After the war, Hamilton became a lawyer. Hamilton’s strong belief in a strong centralized federal government inspired his continuing public service as a representative to the Continental Congress and the Annapolis Convention. Later, as our nation’s first Secretary of the Treasury, he proposed the establishment of a national bank and encouraged the growth of manufacturing in the new nation. He was killed in a duel with Aaron Burr.

□ ***William Paterson, New Jersey***

(Biography available through the EDSITEment-reviewed website Digital Classroom.)

Born in Ireland, William Paterson (Patterson) was a veteran of the War for Independence who served New Jersey in a number of capacities including attorney general. He attended the Constitutional Convention until July, returning only to sign the completed document. He was an advocate of the rights of the small states against the large and co-authored the New Jersey Plan. Later, Paterson served as a United States Senator from New Jersey and associate justice of the United States Supreme Court.

□ ***Edmund Randolph, Virginia***

(Biography available through the EDSITEment-reviewed website Digital Classroom.)

Though his father—a staunch loyalist—moved to England during the American War of Independence, Randolph fought for the patriots, serving as Washington’s aide-de-camp. Having previously held the offices of Virginia Attorney General and Representative to the Continental

Congress, Randolph attended the Constitutional Convention for his home state. There, he presented the Virginia Plan four days after the opening of the convention, proposing a strong central government with three branches. The Virginia Plan was, more than any other plan, the basis of the Constitution as we know it. Ironically, Randolph later wavered in his support of a strong central government, especially concerned about the power placed in the hands of a single executive, the president. In the end, however, he supported ratification of the Constitution, preferring union with a strong federal government over no union at all. Later, Randolph served that government as United States Attorney General and Secretary of State. After retiring from public service, Randolph flourished as a lawyer. In perhaps his most high profile case, he defended Aaron Burr against charges of treason.