
250TH ANNIVERSARY FOUNDERS REFERENCE SYSTEM

Sacred Honor

STUDENT STUDY GUIDES

Colony 1 of 13: New Hampshire

A Companion to *Sacred Honor: The Lives of the Fifty-Six Signers of the Declaration of Independence*

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A NOTE TO PARENTS

Welcome to the *Sacred Honor Student Study Guides*, a thirteen-part companion series to the book *Sacred Honor*, designed to bring the founding generation into your home in a way that is historically honest, faith-grounded, and built for real conversation.

How to use this guide:

Each guide follows the same structure, so once your family learns the pattern, moving through all thirteen colonies will feel natural and familiar. Plan for two to three sessions per colony guide: one to read and discuss, one for the activity, and one for the reflection and wrap-up. You do not need to use every section in every session. Follow your family's pace.

Reading in the book:

Before working through this guide, read the following pages in *Sacred Honor*:

- The New Hampshire Colony Introduction
- Josiah Bartlett profile
- William Whipple profile
- Matthew Thornton profile

For older students (Grades 7 through 12):

Throughout this guide you will see the ● symbol marking Challenger Questions and deeper content. These are designed for students in grades 7 through 12 who are ready to analyze, argue, and apply what they are learning at a higher level. You do not need a separate guide. Use the same one and simply engage the ● sections more fully.

A word about faith:

This guide takes the founders' faith seriously, as a historical reality and as a living example. The Faith Connection section at the end of each guide draws one biblical truth from the colony's story. These are not added on top of the history. They grow out of it.

SECTION 1: THE COLONY

New Hampshire: The Colony That Was Ready

New Hampshire was one of the thirteen original colonies, but it was different from most of its neighbors in one important way: **it was not founded for religious reasons.**

Most of the New England colonies were established by people seeking freedom to worship. Not New Hampshire. Captain John Mason received a land grant in 1622 and sent settlers to the coast in 1623. They came

for **fish, timber, and trade**. New Hampshire's forests contained tall white pines prized for ship masts. The harbors were excellent for trade. New Hampshire was a working colony from the start.

That does not mean faith was absent. Scotch-Irish Presbyterians settled the inland town of Londonderry and brought a serious, covenant-based faith with them. Congregationalists, Anglicans, and Quakers also settled throughout the colony. But unlike Massachusetts, New Hampshire never had one official church that everyone was required to support. People of different faiths lived and worked alongside each other, which was an unusual arrangement in the colonial world.

The economy of New Hampshire ran on timber, shipbuilding, fishing, and trade. One famous grievance: the Crown reserved certain mast-worthy white pines for the Royal Navy, marking them with the "King's Broad Arrow" and restricting colonial use of those trees. Imagine being told you cannot use the trees on your own land. New Hampshire men did not like that very much.

By 1776, New Hampshire had already developed strong habits of self-government. When the royal governor left Portsmouth in August 1775, New Hampshire was already prepared to continue governing itself. It did not have to start from scratch. It was formalizing what it had already built.

Key Facts:

- Colony established: 1623
 - Colony type: Royal Colony
 - Colonial capital: Portsmouth
 - Number of signers: 3
 - Position in order: 1st of 13 (northernmost colony)
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SECTION 2: MEET THE SIGNERS

Josiah Bartlett: The First "Yes"

Josiah Bartlett was a doctor from Kingston, New Hampshire. He was a practical, independent man who taught himself medicine by reading borrowed books. He was not born into a wealthy family. He worked hard, earned his neighbors' trust, and eventually became one of the most respected men in his colony.

When it was time to vote for independence on July 2, 1776, the colonies were called in order from north to south. New Hampshire was first. That meant **Josiah Bartlett cast the very first vote for American independence**, and he made the rafters shake with his "aye."

He was the second man to sign the Declaration of Independence. He also cast the first vote for the Articles of Confederation and was the first to sign that document too.

His property was burned by Loyalist sympathizers because of his patriot activities. He rebuilt and kept serving.

Remember him as: The first "yes." He was the man who started the vote that changed the world.

William Whipple: The Captain Who Changed

William Whipple went to sea as a teenager and was commanding ships by the time he was twenty-one. He was a merchant captain who traded goods across the Atlantic, including enslaved people in his early career. That is a hard fact, and it is part of his story.

During the Revolution, an enslaved man named Prince Whipple who served in William's household challenged him directly. According to historical tradition, Prince told him: *"You are going to fight for your liberty, but I have none to fight for."* William Whipple could not answer that. He offered Prince his freedom in exchange for military service. Prince served, and William kept his word, eventually freeing him before his death in 1785.

Whipple also commanded troops at the **Battle of Saratoga**, one of the most important American victories of the Revolution, and helped negotiate the surrender of the British General Burgoyne.

Remember him as: The captain who heard a hard truth, admitted he was wrong, and changed.

Matthew Thornton: Better Late Than Never

Matthew Thornton was born in Ireland and came to America as a small child. His family barely escaped an attack on their settlement when he was eight years old. He grew up, became a doctor in New Hampshire, and eventually rose to lead the colony's provisional government.

He arrived at the Continental Congress in November 1776, **four months after** the Declaration had been signed. No one required him to sign. The war was going badly. It would have been easy to leave his name off. Instead, he insisted on signing because he wanted, as tradition records, the same privilege as the others: to be hanged for his patriotism.

His signature appears in the lower right corner of the Declaration, separated from Bartlett and Whipple, because there was no room left beside them.

When he died at age 89, his gravestone carried three words: **An Honest Man.**

Remember him as: The man who showed up late and signed anyway. Because it was right.

SECTION 3: THE ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE

Most colonies had to argue, debate, and eventually be pushed toward independence. **New Hampshire was already there.**

Four months before Paul Revere's famous midnight ride, Revere made a less celebrated journey on horseback to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, to warn patriots that British troops were coming to reinforce Fort William and Mary at the harbor. The next morning, New Hampshire patriots stormed the fort, seized its cannon and gunpowder, and lowered the British flag. This happened in **December 1774**, five months before Lexington and Concord.

On January 5, 1776, six months before the Declaration was adopted, New Hampshire became the **first colony to write and adopt its own state constitution**. It was already developing institutions of self-government before independence was official.

When the vote finally came in Philadelphia on July 2, 1776, New Hampshire's delegates did not need to be convinced. They had been ready for a long time.

SECTION 4: PRIMARY SOURCE ENCOUNTER

William Whipple's Letter, January 7, 1776

Six months before the signing of the Declaration, William Whipple wrote a letter to his fellow delegate Josiah Bartlett. Here is part of what he wrote:

"This year, my Friend, is big with mighty events. Nothing less than the fate of America depends upon the virtue of her sons, and if they do not have virtue enough to support the most glorious cause ever human beings were engaged in, they don't deserve the blessings of freedom."

— William Whipple, letter to Josiah Bartlett, January 7, 1776

Reading Questions:

● Explorer (Grades 4 through 6)

1. What did Whipple say the fate of America depended on?
2. What do you think the word "virtue" means? Look it up if you need to.
3. Whipple wrote this six months before independence was declared. What does that tell you about how he was thinking at the time?

● **Challenger (Grades 7 through 12)**

4. Whipple says people who lack virtue "don't deserve the blessings of freedom." Do you agree with that? What is the connection between virtue and freedom?
5. Whipple was a former slave trader who later freed an enslaved man. Does knowing that change how you read this letter? Why or why not?

SECTION 5: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Match each word to its definition. Then use two of the words in a sentence of your own.

Word	Definition
1. Colony	A. The right to make your own laws and govern yourself
2. Virtue	B. A person who supports the existing government or king
3. Delegate	C. A territory settled and governed by people from another country
4. Independence	D. A person sent to represent others in a meeting or assembly
5. Loyalist	E. Good moral character; doing what is right even when it is hard
6. Patriot	F. Freedom from control by another country or government
7. Self-government	G. A person who supports independence from British rule
8. Constitution	H. A written document that establishes the rules for how a government works

Answers: 1-C, 2-E, 3-D, 4-F, 5-B, 6-G, 7-A, 8-H

SECTION 6: DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

● **Family Discussion: Start Here (All Ages)**

New Hampshire had the motto "Live Free or Die." What do you think that means? Is there anything you would be willing to give up your comfort or safety for?

● Explorer Questions: Grades 4 through 6

1. New Hampshire was founded for fish and trade, not for religious reasons. Does that surprise you? How do you think that shaped the kind of people who lived there?
 2. Josiah Bartlett was the first to vote for independence. How do you think he felt at that moment? Would you have been nervous?
 3. Matthew Thornton signed the Declaration four months late, even though nobody made him. Why do you think he insisted on signing?
 4. New Hampshire had already seized a British fort five months before the Battle of Lexington. What does that tell you about the people who lived there?
 5. Whipple freed Prince and took him to war as promised. Have you ever had to keep a promise that cost you something? What did you do?
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● Challenger Questions: Grades 7 through 12

1. New Hampshire's road to independence was described as "shorter and less complicated than most." What advantages did New Hampshire have that other colonies lacked? What does self-government require of the people practicing it?
 2. William Whipple signed the Declaration while being confronted by his own contradiction: he was fighting for freedom while holding an enslaved man. How should we evaluate a person whose convictions are ahead of their actions? What changed him?
 3. Matthew Thornton signed in November 1776, when the war was going badly and the risks were greatest. What does choosing to commit when things look worst tell us about his character compared to someone who commits when success looks guaranteed?
 4. New Hampshire's economy depended on timber, and British restrictions on white pine trees created direct, personal grievance against the Crown. How does personal economic stake affect political conviction? Is that a good or bad motivation for action?
 5. All three New Hampshire signers survived the war and continued in public service for years afterward. What does a culture of sustained public service require? What produces it, and what destroys it?
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SECTION 7: ACTIVITY

The Broad Arrow Challenge

What you need: Paper, pencil, a timer

Background: The Crown marked certain mast-worthy white pine trees with the King's Broad Arrow, reserving them and could not be cut by the colonist who owned the land it grew on.

Part 1: Imagine It

Imagine you are a New Hampshire farmer in 1770. Write a short paragraph (4 to 6 sentences) from your perspective. Your family needs to cut timber to build a new barn. But some of the biggest, most valuable trees on your property have the King's Broad Arrow carved into them, and cutting those trees is illegal.

What do you do? How does it feel to be told you cannot use what is on your own land?

Part 2: Connect It

Now write 2 to 3 sentences connecting your farmer's experience to what Whipple wrote in his letter about the fate of America depending on the virtue of her sons. How did ordinary grievances like this one produce the conviction that led to the Declaration?

For Younger Students: Instead of writing, tell a parent your answer out loud. Have a parent ask you follow-up questions.

SECTION 8: FAITH CONNECTION

Doing Right When No One Requires It

"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters."

— Colossians 3:23

Matthew Thornton did not have to sign the Declaration. He arrived four months late. The signing ceremony was over. No one would have blamed him for leaving his name off. But Thornton signed anyway, because he believed it was the right thing to do, regardless of whether anyone required it.

That is what Colossians 3:23 is describing. Doing your full work, not because someone is watching or because it will earn you recognition, but because it is right. Thornton's three-word epitaph, *An Honest Man*, captures exactly this principle. He was not remembered for fame or power. He was remembered for character. He did what was right, all the way to the end, and asked for nothing more than to be known as honest.

Think about it: Where in your own life do you have the choice between doing the full right thing or doing the easier partial thing when no one is watching? What would it mean to live with an "An Honest Man" (or "An Honest Woman") standard in that area?

SECTION 9: HERO OF YOUR STORY MOMENT

The Man Who Came Late and Signed Anyway

It is November 1776. The war is not going well. George Washington has been chased out of New York. His army is retreating across New Jersey in the cold. Back in Philadelphia, the Declaration of Independence was signed four months ago, and everyone who signed it knows they could be arrested for treason.

Matthew Thornton arrives in Philadelphia. He is finally here, after months of serving in New Hampshire's new government. The signing ceremony is long over. There is no room beside his fellow New Hampshire delegates. Their names are already on the document. There would be no shame in simply taking his seat and serving without adding his name.

He signs anyway. His signature goes in the lower right corner, separate from Bartlett and Whipple, because there is nowhere else to put it. He wanted, as he said, the same privilege as the others: to be hanged for his patriotism.

Your Hero of Your Story Moment:

The Hero of Your Story is not about the perfect moment. It is about the choice: the moment when you could walk away and no one would fault you, but you choose to do the right thing anyway.

Reflection questions:

1. What was Thornton's choice in this moment?
2. What would have been the easy path?
3. What made him choose to sign?
4. Can you think of a time when you had the chance to do something right that nobody required of you? What did you do?

The hero of your story is not someone else. It is you, in the moments that test your character when the cost is real.

SECTION 10: WHAT I LEARNED

Student Reflection Page

Complete these sentences in your own words:

1. The most interesting thing I learned about New Hampshire was _____
 2. The signer from New Hampshire I found most interesting was _____ because _____
 3. One thing I want to remember from this colony's story is _____
 4. A question I still have is _____
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● Older Students: Short Writing Prompt

Matthew Thornton's gravestone read "An Honest Man." In 2 to 3 paragraphs, write what you would want your gravestone to say, and what it would take to earn those words.

Parent Wrap-Up Note:

When you finish the New Hampshire guide, move on to Massachusetts, Colony 2 of 13 in the *Sacred Honor Student Study Guides* series. The next guide follows the same structure, so your family will know exactly what to expect. Massachusetts brings five signers, including John Hancock and Samuel Adams, and a colony that had been at war for fifteen months before the Declaration was even signed.

Sacred Honor Student Study Guides, Colony 1 of 13: New Hampshire

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