



Delaware's Ratification Convention December 3 – 7, 1787

James Latimer, President
(1719 – 1807)

Delawareans from New Castle County elected **James Latimer** as one of thirty deputies authorized to review the proposed federal Constitution at the ratification convention held in Dover beginning December 3, 1787. His signature on Delaware's Ratification Document - "James Latimer, Pres. [ident]," indicates that he presided over the convention.

During the American Revolution, Mr. Latimer served as a member of the New Castle Committee of Safety. Auditors Accounts dated February 5, 1785, record authorization of payment for services provided during the war. James Latimer, along with William Kennedy, provided passage for sixty-three men from Captain George Latimer's independent company from Wilmington to Philadelphia in 1776 for which he received a payment of £4..14..6. Mr. Latimer received an additional sum of £6..15 for transporting two deserters. Between March 1777 and July 17, 1781, Mr. Latimer served as a justice of the Court of Common Pleas for New Castle County and received a salary of £173..10..11 for his four years, four months, and two days service. With an interest in education, he served on the board of the Newark Academy (University of Delaware) in 1783.

By the time of his death in 1807 Mr. Latimer, a businessman, resided in Newport and owned more than 760 acres of real estate in the county as well as bank stock worth more than \$9,580. As a merchant with a wharf and store houses along the Christina Creek, he transported grain and flour to Philadelphia. Probate records indicate that he leased more than 600 acres of land situated in rural Christina Hundred and owned a slave named Amy and her three children – Rachel, George, and Empson. Mr. Latimer conditionally manumitted his woman servant Amy by setting her free three years after his death and instructed his executors to "Bound out" her children until they reached the age of twenty-four.

A variety of outbuildings including a kitchen, woodhouse, stable, and garden surrounded his residence, which he expanded shortly before his death in 1807. According to his will, probated in 1809, he bequeathed his wife Sarah "the new end of my Present Dwelling House with Liberty of Cooking in the Kitchen" and provided the names of his eight children – four sons and four daughters. While James Latimer divided his real estate holdings among his sons George Latimer, Henry Latimer, William Latimer, and Thomas Latimer, he bequeathed his daughters Margret Geddes, Sarah Cuthbert, Jean Latimer and Susannah CathCort the sum of £50 each. Apparently the youngest daughter Jean Latimer also received "a bed and furniture of her choice and furniture for one room." The most expensive object listed on his inventory was 135 ounces of silver valued at \$169.50. Household furnishings included a clock, seven tables, thirty-four chairs, two dressing tables, four beds and furniture, a desk and chest of drawers, and a tea table.

Primary Resource:

New Castle Probate Files, James Latimer 1807 – 1809, RG 2545.001, Roll #251 -Delaware Public Archives.

Secondary Resource:

Bushman, Claudia L., et al, eds. Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Delaware State 1781-1792 and of the Constitutional Convention of 1792. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1988.