The Faulker Murals: Depicting *the* Creation *of a* Nation

The Story Behind the Murals About Our Founding Documents

BY LESTER S. GORELIC

Two large oil-on-canvas murals (each about 14 feet by 37.5 feet), known as the Faulkner Murals, decorate the walls of the Rotunda of the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The murals depict pivotal moments in American history represented by two founding documents: the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

In one mural, Thomas Jefferson of Virginia is depicted handing over his carefully worded and carefully edited draft of the Declaration of Independence to John Hancock of Massachusetts. Many of the other Founding Fathers look on, some fully supportive, some apprehensive.

In the other, James Madison of Virginia is depicted presenting his draft of the Constitution to fellow Virginian George Washington, president of the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and to other members of the Convention.

Although these moments occurred in the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia (Independence Hall)—not in the sylvan settings shown in the murals—the two priceless documents are now in the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., and have been seen by millions of visitors over the years.

When the National Archives Building was built in the mid-1930s, however, these two founding documents were in the custody of the Library of Congress and would not be transferred to the Archives until 1952. Even so, the architects designed and built an exhibition hall that included space for two large murals celebrating the documents.

Creating the murals would prove not to be a simple task. The muralist commissioned for the project, Barry Faulkner, had to serve a number of masters, including the architects, the historical community, and the United States Commission of Fine Arts. Faulkner submitted numerous preliminary sketches to the commission, only to be rejected. At one point, it appeared that the entire mural project was in jeopardy.

The details of how the paintings were conceived and their meanings tell a fascinating back story of American public art, allegory, and American history.

DELEGATES' PLACEMENTS IN DECLARATION BASED ON VIEWS ON INDEPENDENCE

In depicting Jefferson presenting the draft of the Declaration to the Congress, Faulkner portrays the Committee of Five, who were charged with composing a declaration (Thomas Jefferson, John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert Livingston of New York). Included with these five are John Hancock and Virginians Benjamin Harrison and Richard Henry Lee, who made the motion for independence. All of these men stand in the front rows of the right side of the mural.

Lee, who did not see military action during the Revolution, stands defiantly with sword in hand—likely symbolic for his emotion-filled "call-to arms" speech as he made his motion to officially declare independence.

Jefferson's placement at the front of the Committee of Five reflects his position as its head. Although Jefferson was the primary author of the Declaration, his initial draft was edited first by Adams and then by Franklin. The noticeable difference in clothing styles of Adams and Jefferson (as well as Lee) reflects a suggestion made to Faulkner to use clothing to distinguish "the Puritan and Cavalier strains" (New England and Southerners) at the Congress.

Barry Faulkner, a noted American muralist, submitted several sketches or studies before the large murals of the National Archives Exhibit Hall took final form. *Top:* The *Declaration of Independence* (left) and the *Constitution of the United States* (right) have decorated the walls of the National Archives Rotunda since their installation in 1936.

To the left of Jefferson, Hancock, president of the Congress, is partnered with Benjamin Harrison, who served as the chairman of the Committee of the Whole. Hancock is portrayed as poised to receive the draft from Jefferson. Harrison is shown with arms wide open, welcoming the Congress into his committee to discuss the draft.

On the left side of the mural are two groupings. The first consists of John Dickinson of Pennsylvania (hand on chin), standing to the right and somewhat apart from the group composed of Samuel Adams of Massachusetts, Stephen Hopkins of Rhode Island, and Thomas McKean of Delaware. These four men were leaders of the revolutionary movement in the colonies but approached the issues differently.

Dickinson, a conservative revolutionary, preferred negotiation over revolution. He would ultimately abstain from voting on independence. The remaining men, with a cloaked Sam Adams in an oratorical stance and with an expression matching his "firebrand" reputation, advocated the overthrow of British rule.

CLOTHING, OTHER PROPS REVEAL LIVES OF DELEGATES

The three men at the extreme left—Charles Carroll and Samuel Chase, both of Maryland, and Robert Morris of Pennsylvania—worked for independence behind the scenes through the "secret committees" of the Congress.

Carroll and Chase had been commissioned by the Committee of Correspondence to negotiate an alliance with Canada to join in the fight against the British as the 14th state. Morris, a member of the Committee of Secret Correspondence and the Secret Committee of Trade, as was Carroll, coordinated the acquisition of munitions and shipment of arms. Morris was also involved in gathering intelligence on British troop movements through his worldwide shipping fleet. Morris has been called the "Financier of the Revolution" and would later become the superintendent of finance for the first central bank of the new republic, the Bank of North America.

The committee that drafted the Articles of Confederation is represented by Dickinson (chairman), John Adams, Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire, William Ellery of Rhode Island, Hancock, Samuel Huntington of Connecticut, Lee, Robert Morris, Thomas McKean of Delaware, Roger Sherman, and John Witherspoon of New Jersey.

Faulkner uses costuming and props to provide a glimpse of the professional and personal lives of some of the delegates.

Hancock, dressed in elegant clothing, came from the elite of Boston society. The small roll of paper in his right hand likely represents the speech he gave after the Boston Massacre, dispelling any of the prior doubts of Bostonians about his patriotism. McKean was a judge and is portrayed with a Pennsylvania court judicial gown draped over his arm. Wythe, wearing a black robe, was America's first law professor. Witherspoon, also in black robes, was the president of the College of New Jersey.

John Adams, Hopkins, and William Floyd of New York are portrayed with walking sticks, a symbol of authority and wealth. Hopkins, considered an early true patriot, and Joseph Hewes of North Carolina are portrayed with hats and clothing reflecting their Quaker backgrounds. (Ironically, Hewes would later become the first secretary of naval affairs.) Bartlett is brandishing a sword symbolic of his having been a commander in the New Hampshire militia.

FOR THE CONSTITUTION: COMMITTEES AND PLANS

Faulkner painted a clear sky and a "trophy" of state flags of each of the 13 original colonies to convey that the Constitution was written during a time of peace and that the individual states were joined in a union under the Constitution.

In the *Constitution* mural, which faces the *Declaration of Independence* mural, Faulkner portrays the chairmen of two committees—John Rutledge of South Carolina, and William Samuel Johnson of Connecticut—in the front row. The chairman of his third committee, Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts, is portrayed centrally but diminutively in a back row.

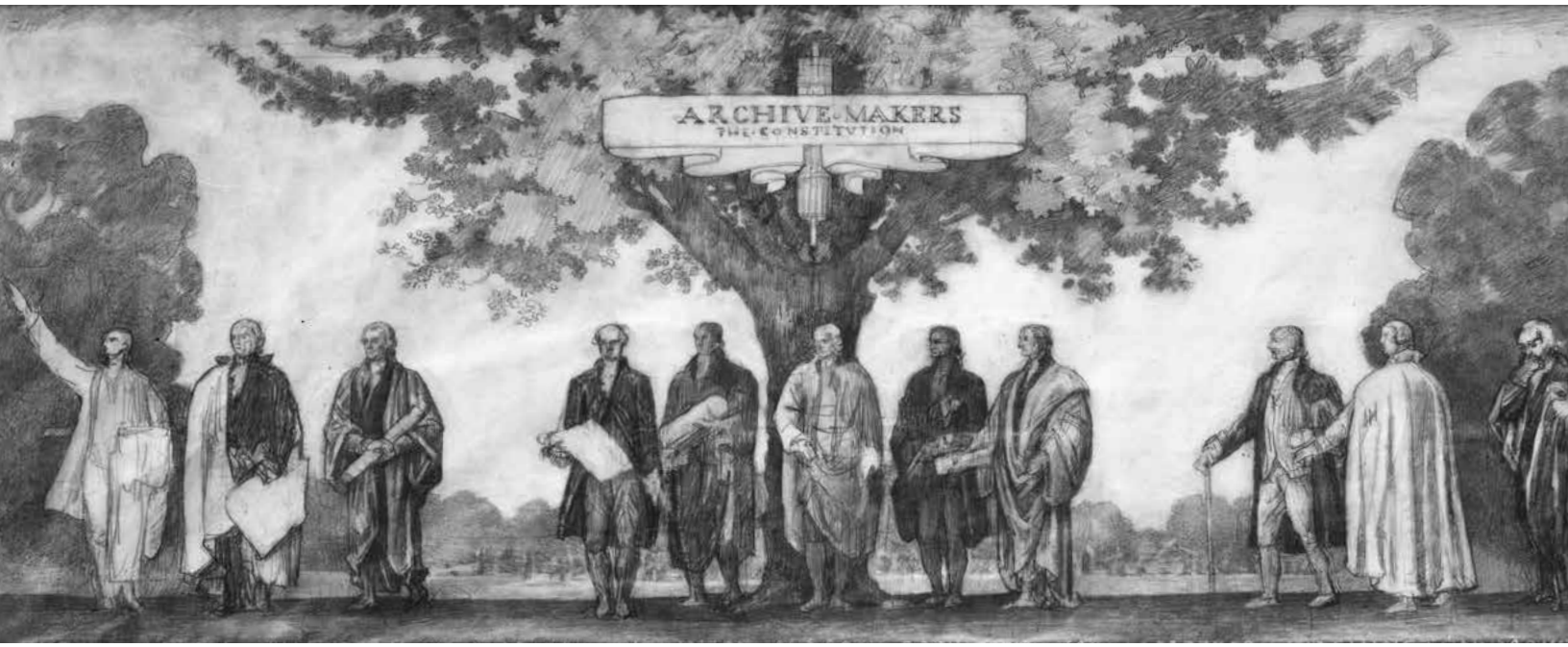
Edmund Randolph of Virginia, portrayed obscurely and paired with and behind Nathaniel Gorham of Massachusetts at the extreme left, presented to the Convention a draft plan—the Virginia Plan, which served as the working document for the Constitution. Gorham was the chairman of the Committee of the Whole, which deliberated for first two months of the Convention on Randolph's plan. The bundle of parchment Gorham carries likely represents the record of these deliberations, a record that became the Gorham Report.

To the right of Gorham is Rutledge (holding a book), whose "Committee of Detail" incorporated all the details of the Gorham Report into the first draft of the Constitution. The other members of this committee were Randolph, Gorham, James Wilson of Pennsylvania (to the right of Rutledge), and Oliver Ellsworth of Connecticut (right of Wilson).

Two drafts of a Constitution were actually generated by Rutledge's committee. Wilson contributed several key elements to a somewhat disjointed preliminary first draft, among which were the Electoral College and the guiding principle of separation of powers. He also proposed the slavery compromise and would go on to almost singlehandedly handwrite the second draft, which would serve with little correction as the working document for Johnson's committee.

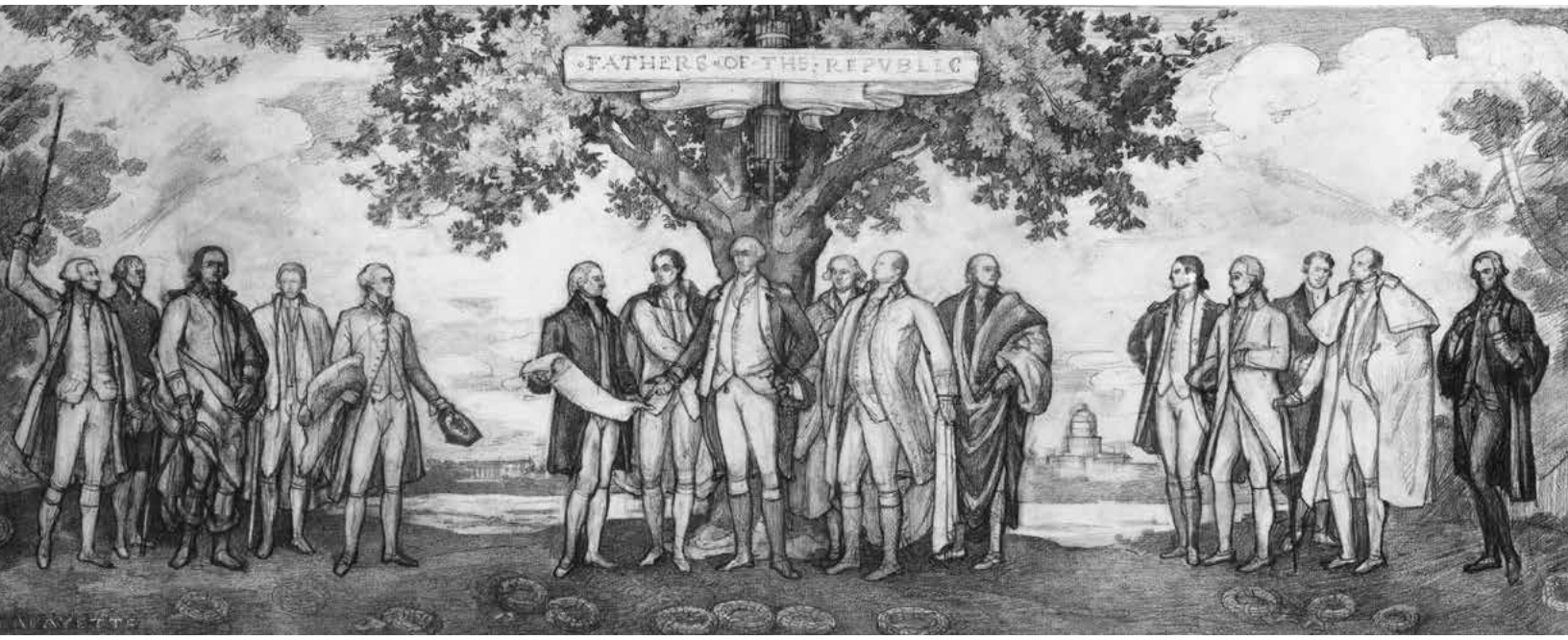
Ellsworth, through his additional participation in Gerry's committee, had been the primary advocate for and one of two architects (with Roger Sherman) of the Great Compromise, which resolved how states would be represented in the legislature. Ellsworth is portrayed holding a partially unrolled and disorganized document, likely symbolizing the preliminary draft, and a quill symbolizing his role in the compromise.

The *Archive Makers* sketches supported the bid for the contract. *Above:* The *Declaration* featured, left to right, unknown, R. Morris, unknown, unknown, B. Franklin, unknown, T. Jefferson, S. Adams, R. H. Lee. *Bottom:* The *Constitution* featured, *left to right*, A. Hamilton, J. Monroe, O. Ellsworth, J. Madison, J. Dickinson, G. Mason, E. Randolph, J. Jay, Gouverneur Morris, G. Washington, J. Marshall.



Johnson's committee, the Committee of Style and Arrangement, accepted the draft from Rutledge's committee and used it to produce the final draft of the Constitution, represented by the carefully rolled document cradled in his hands. The members of this committee were Alexander Hamilton of New York, G. Morris, Madison, and Rufus King of Massachusetts.

Madison, to the left of Johnson, is shown symbolically submitting "the original draft of the Constitution to Washington and a group of the Convention members." Behind and paired with him is Charles Pinckney of South Carolina, who had presented a plan to the Convention at the same time as Randolph, the elements of which were integrated into the final draft without prior discussion.



The recomposed *Archive Makers: The Constitution* presented with the first-stage studies at the July 26, 1934, commission meeting. *Left to right:* M. de Lafayette, C. Strong, G. Mason, J. Dickinson, A. Hamilton, J. Madison, O. Ellsworth, G. Washington, G. Morris, E. Randolph, J. Jay, C. C. Pinckney, J. Monroe, R. King, A Gallatin, J. Marshall.

THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE POWER OF THE STATES

On the right side of the mural, primarily, Faulkner represents allegorically the conflicts in the Convention over the form of the new republic's government.

In the grouping of three men adjacent to Washington are King, William Paterson of New Jersey, and Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina. King advocated a "supreme" central government, and Paterson a government with the states retaining considerable power. Additionally, King supported the Virginia, or large state, plan for government; Paterson was the architect of the New Jersey, or small state, plan. Gen. C. C. Pinckney, paired with Paterson, shared Paterson's view on the states' retaining a role in the government.

The three men in the next group on the right were strong advocates for a supreme central government. George Read of Delaware, portrayed as an outlier in shadow at the far right, advocated the extreme approach of erasing all state boundaries. The one-legged Gouverneur Morris favored an aristocracy, reflected in the aristocratic bearing of his portrait. Hamilton favored a powerful, almost monarchical, form of central government with an executive and senate elected for life, likely symbolized in his gold cape and partially raised sword. G. Morris and Hamilton played key roles in the ratification of the Constitution.

Behind Washington and over his shoulders are George Mason of Virginia and Benjamin Franklin. Mason and Franklin favored a plural executive; a singular executive is personified in Washington.

Supporters of states' rights are seen throughout the composition. However, four such individuals—Luther Martin of Maryland, Sherman, Gunning Bedford, Jr., of Delaware, and Abraham Baldwin of Georgia—are clustered at the top of the steps of the portico.

The exposed epaulette on Washington's right shoulder, scabbard, and riding boots (with spurs) present an image of Washington as commander-in-chief once more. The cape barely hanging on his shoulders is reminiscent of portraits of the monarchs of the time. Together with his facial expression and stance, the portrayal projects the dignity of a monarch, which was how the Congress (particularly the Federalists) preferred Washington to present himself to the European powers.

Two of the men discussed in this section—Martin (who wrote the Supremacy Clause) and Mason—did not sign the Constitution.

Rutledge's clothing was typical of the finery worn by delegates from the southern states. Faulkner may therefore be using the contrasting clothing of Gorham (from Massachusetts) in the same way he used Jefferson and John Adams in the *Declaration* to distinguish the two "strains" at the Convention.

Delegates associated with the judiciary are shown in their robes. Ellsworth and Read were judges; Wilson was a legal scholar. Paterson would become an associate justice of the Supreme Court but is portrayed wearing a style of robe seen in portraits of Chief Justice John Jay instead of the robe shown in Paterson's own portraits.

Gen. C. C. Pinckney is costumed in a manner befitting his rank. The red sash around Hamilton's waist, the exposed epaulette, the riding boots, and officer's short sword are consistent with the military rank he held in the Battle at Yorktown, commander of the

light infantry. The gray color of his uniform, however, was seen only in uniforms worn in the first year of the War of 1812.

Charles Pinckney's love of scholarship is sybmolized in the book he is holding over his heart. The walking sticks of Gouverneur Morris and Charles Pinckney are symbolic of social status. Sherman is portrayed holding his walking stick in a sinister manner, likely reflecting the comment of Jeremiah Wadsworth, a Connecticut statesman, that Sherman is as "cunning as the devil, slippery as an eel."

Finally, Bedford is shown with his left hand outstretched surreptitiously, likely reflecting his "foreign influence" statement, "Sooner than be ruined, there are foreign powers who will take us [small states] by the hand."

The first-stage studies presented at the July 26, 1934, commission meeting. *Top:* The *Declaration* features, left to right, G. Wythe, G. Read, R. Morris, R. Sherman, J. Adams, G. Livingston, B. Franklin, T. Jefferson, S. Adams, P. Henry, R. H. Lee. *Bottom:* In the *Constitution* the individuals portrayed are unchanged from the *Archive Makers Constitution.*

THE BACK STORY: FAULKNER IS HIRED, OFFERS SKETCHES

On October 23, 1933, the chief architect of the National Archives, J. Russell Pope, recommended the approval of a two-year contract to hire Barry Faulkner, a noted American muralist, to paint a mural for the Exhibit Hall in the planned National Archives Building.

The contract awarded $36,000 in costs plus $6,000 for incidental expenses, with all deliverables due two years later.

The work would be supervised by Pope. The government was represented on the contract by Louis A. Simon, the supervising architect for the Treasury Department. All work on the murals would need the approval of both architects. The United States Commission of Fine Arts would serve in an advisory capacity.

The team presented expertise in art, architecture, painting, and sculpture. Faulkner had trained under and worked with renowned artists and sculptors and was among the muralists considered to have revolutionized decorative painting in America.

By 1933, Faulkner had been commissioned by and completed murals for the Eastman Theater (Rochester, New York), RCA Building, Rockefeller Center (New York City), and Mortensen Hall of Bushnell Center (Hartford, Connecticut). Pope had been the architect for the National Gallery of Art, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, and the Masonic Temple of the Scottish Rite in Washington, D.C.

Missing from the team was credentialed expertise in United States history. This deficiency haunted the project for several months until the team added J. Franklin Jameson from the Library of Congress, regarded by the chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, Charles Moore, as the "dean of American history."

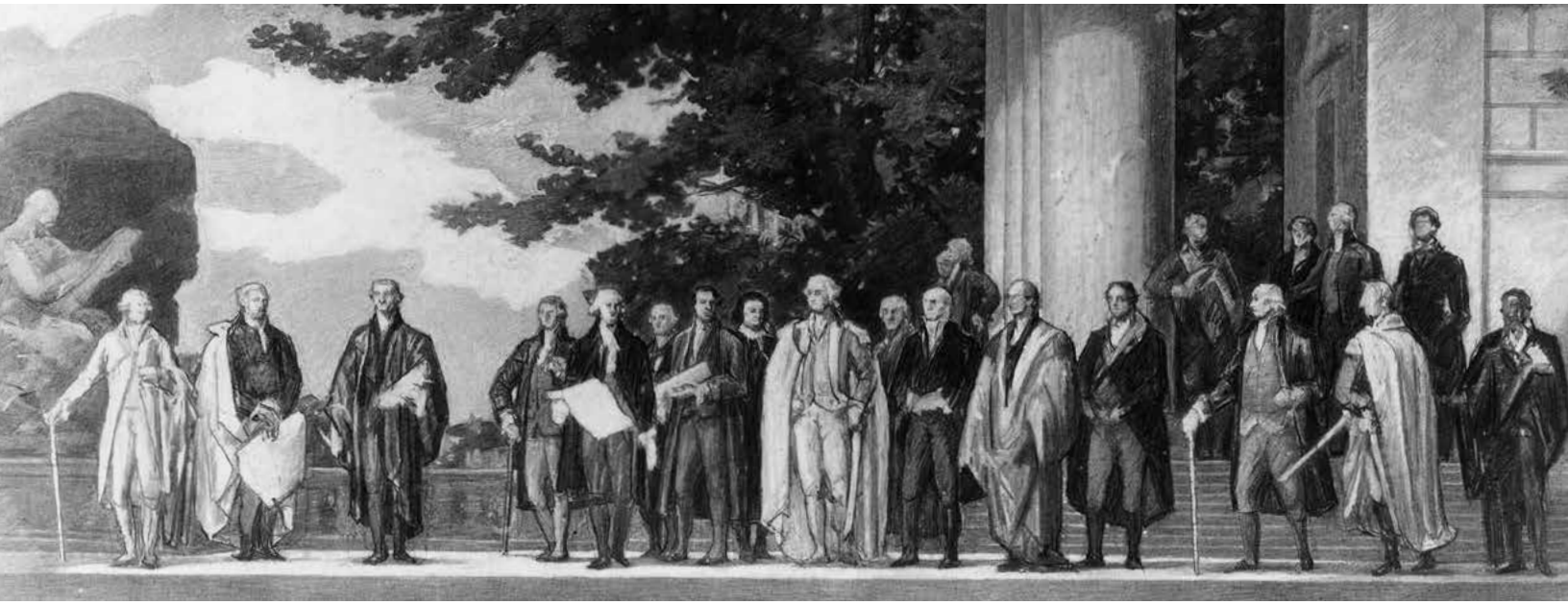
Two sketches had been supplied with the contract. One was titled *Archive Makers: The Declaration* and the other *Archive Makers: The Constitution.* Both sketches showed a lineup of persons of importance to the early republic, set against a purely landscape background.

The sketches did not elicit much reaction from the commission. According to the minutes from the January 1934 meeting, the commission commented, "you get as much life and congruity in your *Constitution* as you have done in your *Declaration*, that mostly front views are shown" and that "Washington ought to be doing a little something."

FAULKNER PREPARES SKETCH "FATHERS OF THE REPUBLIC"

In the months that followed, Faulkner worked on and completed a new *Constitution*, retitled *Fathers of the Republic* and the first-stage studies required by the contract. The completed *Fathers* sketch demonstrates a major rethinking of organization. Washington is clearly the central figure, and the men are clustered. Monroe had been deleted from the original sketch; Albert

Expanded studies showing men through Lincoln and his time, based on recommendations made by Charles Moore, with statues representing war *(Declaration)* or peace *(Constitution). Top: Declaration.* Left to right along the base are H. Clay, A. Gallatin, A. Lincoln, J. Monroe, R. Sherman, G. Livingston, J. Adams, J. Hancock, J. Dickinson (obscured), R. Morris, T. Jefferson, S. Adams, P. Henry, B. Franklin. By the column, extreme left in front, B. Harrison R. H. Lee; in back, 3 unknown. At top of steps, to right of column, from left: G. Wythe, W. Floyd. *Bottom: Constitution,* left to right: unknown, J. Wilson, O. Ellsworth, C. Pinckney (in back), J. Madison, E. Gerry (in back), S. Johnson, G. Mason (behind Washington), G. Washington, B. Franklin (behind Washington), R. King, W. Paterson, C. C. Pinckney, G. Morris, A. Hamilton, W. Read. At the left of the column are W. R. Davie and J. Langdon, and at right of column, left to right, are L. Martin, R. Sherman, B. Gunning, A. Baldwin.



Gallatin (who was treasury secretary under Jefferson and Madison), the Marquis de Lafayette, Gen. C. C. Pinckney, and Celeb Strong had been added. Based on Simon's comments that "it was limited to the early days of the Republic" and "the figures would be disproportionately large," this sketch was not considered further.

The first-stage studies had been mounted on the "walls" of a partial cutaway scale model of the Exhibit Hall. The commission used black-and-white photographs of the construct to evaluate both the artistry and how well the murals would integrate with the decorations in the hall.

One first notices the change in backgrounds to a mix of landscape and architecture. "The [new] background would integrate well with the stark architecture of the Exhibit Hall, and would impart a feeling of distance and space; and the alternative, an architectural background, would require the use of Independence Hall, which would be monotonous across two panels," Faulkner later explained.

The positions of the men in the first-stage *Declaration* differ from the original sketch. Two men had been added, Patrick Henry and another whose identity is lost to history. For the *Constitution,* it is almost as if the lineup of men in the original sketch had been cut out and pasted into a new background.

The commission, in a letter to Simon on July 27, explained that they "agree[d] that a more comprehensive treatment of the matter was desirable in connection with the wide range of materials to be housed in the Archives Building." Simon forwarded a copy of this letter with his comments to Pope the following day. It is clear from Pope's reply to Simon that he understood the commission's concern to mean that the murals "should be a subject related to this particular building."

Subsequent attempts by Faulkner and Pope to obtain additional information on the commission's evaluation of the first-stage studies failed. Still, Faulkner forged ahead, completing a revised set of first-stage studies. Through a process of addition and deletion, the number of men in his prior first-stage *Declaration* had been increased by four and now included John Hancock.

HISTORICAL SCOPE EXTENDED, BUT COMMISSION SAYS "NO"

Faulkner submitted the revised studies for presentation at the commission's September 17 meeting. He introduced his new studies as the signers of the Declaration and the signers of the Constitution (even though Patrick Henry was included in the *Declaration*, John Marshall and Lafayette in the *Constitution*, and James Monroe in both).

The lack of comprehensiveness was brought up again. Moore proposed as a solution that "one of the panels be dedicated to the founders of the Republic and the other to Abraham Lincoln and his time."

Viewing Moore's proposal positively, Faulkner developed two lists accommodating the portrayal of up to 19 men in each study, with each list based on one of two selection models for each subject.

The first model was "to confine the subject matter to men of primary and secondary importance who wrote or signed the Declaration and the Constitution or who were intimately concerned with the two documents, but not members of the Conventions: like Patrick Henry, Otis, John Jay and Marshall."

The second was "to enlarge the scope of the subject, introducing great statesmen up to the time of Jackson or even Lincoln, but with the stress still on the men of the Constitution and Declaration."

Based on his lists, Faulkner composed a new set of studies and submitted them to Moore's office on September 22. What is immediately apparent in the new studies are features from the *Fathers* sketch. Specifically, men are distributed throughout the composition and are organized into clusters. Additionally, in the *Constitution,* Washington is now the central figure.

Twenty-one men are portrayed in the *Declaration,* 10 more than in the prior study. Henry Clay, Gallatin, and Lincoln had been added. Twenty-two men are portrayed in the *Constitution*, 11 more than in the prior study. With the exception of the statue and a few missing persons to the left of Charles Pinckney, the *Constitution* resembles the fully evolved mural.

Unbeknownst to Faulkner, Moore had drafted a letter to Pope on September 25, a day before receiving Faulkner's new studies. Moore provided a clear insight into the commission's vision for the murals: "Thus, opportunity is offered, as never since the Rotunda of the Capitol was decorated, to express in mural work the significance of the place of the building itself in the history of the country."

The letter also stated that the commission found the original first-stage studies to be inadequate, lacking unity and needed focal character; and recommended their disapproval.

Moore's draft letter was not delivered to Pope until mid-October, after Moore had personally met with him to discuss the status of the contract.

At Moore's request, he and Pope met in Newport, Rhode Island, on October 10 and 11 to discuss the status of the murals. Faulkner was brought into the discussion by phone. Pope and Moore informally agreed that Faulkner needed to discard his prior studies and prepare an entirely new set.

According to the report on the meeting, "two new panels should be prepared for submission, the first panel is to present the Declaration of Independence, the second, the Constitution, general terms to connote the spirit in which these historic documents were produced."

The fact that the actual Declaration and Constitution were at the Library of Congress was brought up twice at the commission meetings. Moore remarked that "when laying the cornerstone for the new Archives building, President Hoover referred to them saying that they would be deposited in the new Archives building."

Not until December 13, 1952, 16 years after the opening of the building, would the two documents be transferred to the National Archives Building and enshrined in their display cases.

HISTORIAN JAMESON OFFERS HELP ON WHOM TO DEPICT

Faulkner requested Moore's help in assembling an authoritative list (25 men for each picture) for a new set of studies, and Moore suggested that Faulkner contact Jameson for assistance, noting that he had already asked Jameson to "put his mind to the subject."

Moore continued: "First, in the *Declaration*, only half the signers can be represented. Therefore, the selection of twenty-five out of fifty men should have a basis in some broad generalization. Second, it has seemed to me that in a central group, the contrasting puritan and cavalier strains, would give the artist a great opportunity in costume and type—the Lees and John Adams. Third, I do not see why the buildings peeping out at the ends should not be Georgian. Fourth, the Declaration stood for war, the Constitution for peace. Is there not an opportunity to work this feeling into the skies? Fifth, Washington's character produced the harmony in the Convention which brought the Constitution into being." Moore closed

by commenting "I suppose Madison had most to do with the text and details of the Constitution, and that Hamilton and John Adams had most to do with its ratification."

By November 16, Jameson had provided Faulkner with a list of possible men to portray and a rationale for his selections. He advised including in each study at least one person from each state, lest "there be outcries if there was any one [state] that did not have a figure in the painting." For the *Declaration*, "John Hancock as well as Thomas Jefferson and his committee needed to be included."

Jameson's *Declaration* list named Hancock, Jefferson, and 11 men from the remaining states and named 10 additional men in order of preference "should the need arise for additional." He also provided a list of 19 men for the *Constitution*.

FAULKNER USES COMMITTEES TO DETERMINE GROUPINGS

Using Jameson's lists plus some additional men, Faulkner submitted a new set of studies to the commission. In his presentation note, Faulkner clarified that "the *Declaration* symbolized war, the *Constitution* peace. His committee groupings show thirteen in one group to represent the thirteen original colonies; and only Benjamin Franklin and one or two other statesmen had been duplicated in each of the sketches."

Faulkner explained that the basis for his groupings was that of the committees appointed in the two Conventions: "The Committee of the Grand [Great] Compromise . . . , the Committee for the first draft of the Constitution; and the Committee for the final draft of the Constitution. The groups are centered on Washington where men served on more than one committee. Finally, a few important men had been included, such as General Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and his cousin Charles Pinckney, who did not serve on these committees."

Two committees are represented in the *Declaration*, Faulkner continued: "One is comprised of Jefferson and the Committee on the Declaration [the Committee of Five] with Hancock and Harrison. The second, the committee for drafting the Articles of Confederation, is represented because it was closely linked with the Committee on the Constitution and was appointed at the same time; the Articles were useful as a basis for some parts of the Constitution and help link the two subject matters; and the Committee gave a man from each state. R. H. Lee is positioned prominently in the *Declaration* because of his motion for independence. Finally, men not on any committee are by themselves."

Twenty-seven men were portrayed in the new *Constitution*, grouped the same as in the fully evolved mural. Thirty-three men were portrayed in the new *Declaration*.

Where Faulkner had placed statues representing war (*Declaration*) and peace (*Constitution*), the commission suggested using standards of the colonies "to represent the dangerous situation of the men who took part in the Declaration of Independence"; and "trophies of victory and the Stars and Stripes" for the Constitution. Overall, the commission evaluated the new studies favorably.

Following the December meeting of the commission, Faulkner set to work incorporating their recommendations into a final set of studies. In a letter to Moore, he explained that the basis for the groupings remained the same as for the prior set of studies.

The sculpted figures in the prior set of studies, he wrote, had been replaced with "known Revolutionary battle flags in the *Declaration*; and for the *Constitution*, the State flags of the thirteen original colonies in the symbol of the Union Not mentioned were the realistic gathering storm clouds now appearing in the sky of the *Declaration*, addressing Moore's suggestion to represent "war" in the skies.

FINAL VERSION APPROVED; MURALS COME TO ARCHIVES

With his final studies, Faulkner had produced two murals that were historically consistent throughout. This even applies to the architecture, which is representative of the type found in early Greek democracies. Additionally, the columns are intended to be "pillars of democracy."

The individual elements of each mural are integrated, and through the Articles of Confederation, Faulkner has linked the two murals historically.

Finally, through the use of costuming, Faulkner "covertly" enhanced the historic scope of the murals from the early days of the Republic through the Revolution and the War of 1812. In the storm clouds in the *Declaration* one can see Lincoln's profile turned on its side. The Lincoln image extends the historical period into the Civil War, making the murals better serve as frontispieces for the contents of the Archives building.The commission officially approved Faulkner's latest studies on January 21, 1935.

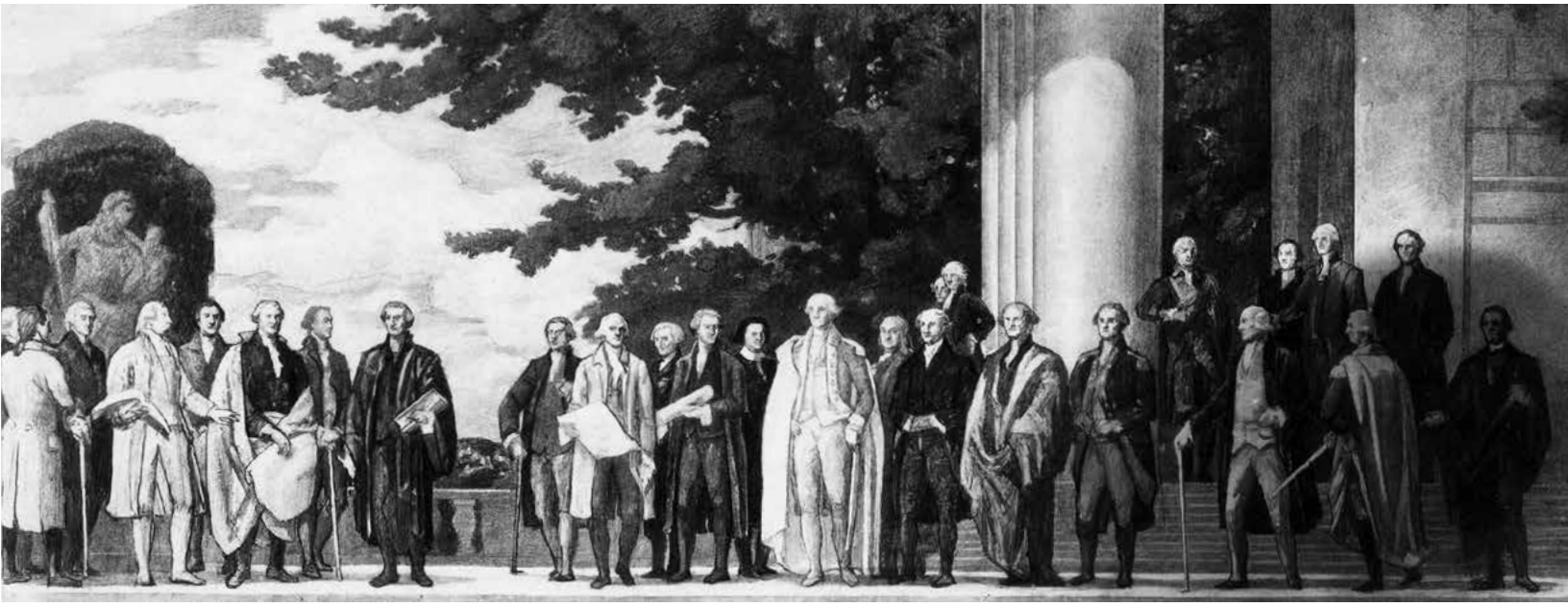
After completing the individual drawings of the figures and incorporating them into the cartoons, Faulkner moved out of his studio and rented space in the attic over New York's Grand Central Station. Here he built two walls 40 feet long by 18 feet high facing each other to support the canvases.

By December 20, the completed cartoons had been enlarged to full size by photography and traced onto the canvas. Faulkner

To learn more about

- Faulkner's role in designing camouflage for U.S. troops in World War I, go to *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/spring/.*
- Conservation work given to the Faulkner murals, go to *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/.*
- Where the Declaration and Constitution were kept before coming to the Archives, go to *www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/winter/.*

Recomposed expanded studies based on listings provided by J. Franklin Jameson and provided at the December 3, 1934, commission meeting. *Top: Declaration. Bottom: Constitution.*



provided 24 inches of empty canvas to allow for possible differences between the space allotted for the murals in the plans and the actual space on the curved walls of the Exhibit Hall.

The commission visited Faulkner's studio on March 12, 1936, to see Faulkner's compositions—now in full color. At that time, Faulkner informed the commission he had approximately six more months of work on details; they were completed as promised in September.

The completed murals were rolled up on wooden drums, boxed, and shipped to the National Archives in Washington. Faulkner and one his painters, John Sitton, and paperhanger Fred Crittendon accompanied the murals. By October 15, the murals had been installed on the Rotunda walls, and the artists painted in the areas where they had extra space. The first public viewing was in early November.

One year after their installation, the painted surface of each mural was completely varnished using beeswax and varnish in turpentine followed by buttermilk in water. Faulkner instructed that the treated surface of the murals not be touched and explained that the pictures could be expected to stay in good condition for 40 or 50 years.

MURALS RECEIVE CONSERVATION TREATMENT AFTER 60 YEARS

As Faulkner predicted, the murals did stay in decent condition for about 40 years. By 1986, however, they were exhibiting buckles and bulges due to the crumbling of the plaster behind them and deformation of the canvas. In 1999, needed conservation work for the murals was officially designated as a "Save America's Treasures" project. The project was timed to coincide with the first-ever top-to-bottom renovation of the National Archives Building, during which it would be closed to visitors. Conservation of the murals was completed by November 2002, and they were reinstalled on the Rotunda walls.

The story of these historic murals, which enhance the meaning of the documents on display just below them, is fascinating in itself, for it sheds light on the differing interpretations about the roles of many of those we call the "Founding Fathers." How each man is depicted tells a lot about him and the beliefs he brought to the Pennsylvania State House in 1776 or 1787 to debate either the Declaration or the Constitution.

Although Faulkner kept the main visual focus of the murals on a single subject, either the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution, he was able to inject other messages.

Taking into consideration the possible symbolic meanings of the "Lincoln" cloud (Civil War) and Hamilton's gray uniform (War of 1812), Faulkner appears to have used costuming and the sky to expand the scope of history represented from the early days of the Republic.

In that sense, the murals span the arc of our nation's early history. P

Note on Sources

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Summary descriptions of Faulkner's rationale for the organization and content of the murals, as well as their painting and installation, were found in the autobiography *Barry Faulkner: Sketches from an Artist's Life* (Dublin, New Hampshire: William L. Bauhan, 1973); and Alan F. Rumrill and Carl B. Jacobs, Jr., *Steps to Great Art: Barry Faulkner and the Art of the Muralist* (Keene, NH; Historical Society of Cheshire County, 2007). A more detailed description was provided in a transcript of a presentation made in 1957 by Faulkner to the Keene (N.H.) Daughters of the American Revolution, in the Barry Faulkner Papers in the Archives of American Art, Research Collection, Series 3: Writings: "Archives," 1957 *(www.aaa.si.edu/collections/container/viewer/Archives--282658).*

The contract hiring Faulkner to paint the murals is in the Records of the Public Building Services, Record Group (RG) 121, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

The stages in the evolution of the murals from their original sketches through their painting and installation are captured in the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts correspondence and meeting minutes in the Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, 1893–1981, RG 66.

Photographic reproductions of the sketches and studies Faulkner submitted to the Commission for review are in the Peter A. Juley & Son Collection at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Only three of the reproductions carried identifications of the portrayed individuals, and none of the reproductions are dated. Fortunately, a "Rosetta Stone" for matching portrayals with names in the form of listings was included with a letter from Faulkner to Charles Moore of September 20, 1934, in Record Group 66.

The process of conserving the murals is summarized in Richard Blondo, "Historic Murals Conservation at the National Archives" in *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration* 44 (Fall 2012): 26–29.

Interpretation of the murals proved to be a daunting task. Faulkner's explanations to the commission on his murals (Records of the Commission of Fine Arts, RG 66) contain only the core elements of the organization of his compositions. With the exception of the differences in clothing of Jefferson and Adams in the *Declaration,* the records do not provide a basis for the poses and costuming in the individual "portraits" and a rationale for the color schemes promised to the commission.

Further information about the organization of the *Declaration* mural's composition, roles of individual delegates, and personal and professional lives were was found primarily in the *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1724–1789,* ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, et al. (Washington, D.C.: 1904–37), vol. 4, and Reverend Charles A. Goodrich, *Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence*, 2nd ed. (New York: Thomas Mather Publisher, 1832).

For the *Constitution* mural, the same type of information, as well as the members of the commuttee writing the Articles of Confederation came from Max Farrand, ed., *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1911), vols. 1–3; Catherine Drinker Bowen, *Miracle at Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitutional Convention May to September 1787* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966); and Farrand, *The Fathers of the Constitution: A Chronicle of the Establishment of the Union* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921); and other articles and books about individual delegates.

The comment on Sherman's character is a direct quote from "Letter from Jeremiah Wadsworth to Rufus King," June 3, 1787, in Farrand's *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787.*

The commentary on Alexander Hamilton's military uniform is based on information from James L. Kochan, *The United States Army, 1812–1815* (Oxford, England: Osprey Publishing, 2000); and David Cole, "Survey of U.S. Army Uniforms, Weapons and Accoutrements," *(www.history.army.mil/html/museums/uniforms/survey_uwa.pdf).*

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