

Cornelius C. Schoonmaker

Ulster County

Born: 1745, Shawangunk, Ulster County

You are Cornelius P. Schoonmaker, born in 1745 in Shawangunk, Ulster County, New York. Little is known of your background, though presumably someone in your family's past made schools, or schooners. Not you though, for you are a farmer and a surveyor . . . and an agitator, patriot, and politician.

In the run-up to the war, you served on the local committee of vigilance and safety, charged with ferreting out loyalists and enforcing boycotts. Once the state government was formally established in 1777, you were elected, and continuously reelected, to the state assembly. Indeed, you are there now, returned again to office by the voters of Ulster, who also favored you with election to the New York State Ratifying Convention meeting in Poughkeepsie to accept or reject the Constitution. You received the second-fewest votes of six delegates, though you beat out James Clinton, brother of the governor and Revolutionary War general.

Ulster is Antifederalist territory, and you were elected on the Antifederalist ticket. But you are nevertheless a Moderate, open to the idea of ratification and frightened at the prospect of New York's remaining outside the union.

Game Play Instructions

Consult the Moderate role sheet for your primary instructions.

Moderates as a group are intended to be fair-minded judges of the speeches and proposals offered by others, honest brokers without interests or objectives of their own. In fact, the power lies with you to determine if the Constitution is ratified or rejected. The formal factions, Federalists and Antifederalists, are equal in number and will largely cancel each other out.

But you may divide into two parties, because among you are two delegates resolved to move the Moderates into the Federalist or Antifederalist camp — Jonathan N. Havens for the Federalists and Jacobus Swartwout for the Antifederalists. Listen to the liaisons and listen to the arguments. Then cast your votes, issue by issue, favoring what you believe to be the better arguments. You may go back and forth; strength on one issue might not carry over to another. Your best judgment is what the game is asking of you.

Also your participation in debate: you double your vote on any issue to which you make a substantive contribution. Needless to say, participation will improve your grade.

Because you don't write and deliver speeches (not enough time), you instead take a short exam before the start of the game, based on the Gordon Wood reading found in the game book. The exam winner(s) casts an extra vote throughout the game, including the final vote to ratify or reject the Constitution.
