

Henry Oothoudt

Albany City and County · Pronunciation: OAT-howt

Born: January 6, 1739

Your unpronounceable surname is a sure tip-off that you are of Dutch ancestry. You are Henry Oothoudt [OAT-howt], born January 6, 1739, to Volkert Oothoudt. Little is known of your private life except that you married Eleanor "Neeltje" Van Bergen Oothoudt and had one daughter, Catherina, by her. You live in Catskill, Albany County, New York.

With the collapse of British authority in 1775, extra-legal, interim governments— in the form of committees, conventions, and congresses— stepped in to fill the void. You served in the second of four congresses (1775–76). After a new state constitution came into effect in 1777, you were elected to the state assembly in 1779–80 and then to the state senate in 1781–85. From 1781 to 1782 you served also on the governor's council of appointment.

This past spring the voters of Albany County favored you with election to the New York State Ratifying Convention meeting in Poughkeepsie to accept or reject the Constitution. Albany is Antifederalist territory, and you ran on the Antifederalist ticket, finishing second in total votes to John Lansing, the mayor. But unlike Lansing, you are soft in your commitment to Antifederalist principles and are open to the idea of ratifying the Constitution, perhaps with amendments. Governor George Clinton is the party head and the convention chair by unanimous consent. You though are the chair when the convention meets as a committee of the whole (a parliamentary device meant to encourage free and open debate); and since the convention meets only as a committee of the whole (for game purposes), you are the functional chair. Your moderate views and calm disposition recommended you, and you easily defeated the Federalist candidate for the post, Richard Morris.

Game Play Instructions

Consult the Moderate role sheet for your primary instructions.

You are the convention chair, presiding over the convention as it meets in "committee of the whole" — which is how it operates throughout the game. Your duties: introduce speakers and topics at the start of each round, enforce time limits on speeches, entertain floor comments and questions after speeches, and call and tally votes at the conclusion of each issue's debate.

Because you are chair, you do not vote on individual issues. You cast a vote only on the final roll call — ratify or reject — and that vote is doubled if you are among the winner(s) of the game-opening exam on the Gordon Wood reading.

Chair Procedure Open each round by announcing the issue. Call on the Federalist speaker, then the Antifederalist speaker. After speeches, open the floor to comments — Moderates may participate here to earn their double vote. When debate concludes, call the vote and record the tally. Move to the next issue.