

Jesse Woodhull

Orange County

Born: February 10, 1735, Setauket, Long Island

You are Jesse Woodhull, born to Nathaniel Woodhull and Sarah Smith Woodhull on February 10, 1735, in Setauket, Suffolk County, Long Island. In 1753 you married Hester Du Bois, moved to Blagg's Cove, Orange County, and set about producing a family of seven. The town was renamed Cornwall in 1764.

You served in the war as a colonel in the state militia, commander of the Cornwall Regiment of the Fourth Brigade under General George Clinton. You were at Fort Montgomery when it fell to the British, but its purpose was to prevent reinforcements reaching General Burgoyne in the Albany area, and that objective was achieved. Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga in October 1777, a victory that proved to be the turning point in the war. During the nine years of war, the militia was called out twelve times and was in the field 292 days.

When New York became formally a state with the ratification of its constitution in 1777, you served in the senate, elected four times (1777–81). And you twice served on the governor's council of appointment (1777–78). Your better-known elder brother, Nathaniel, served in the colonial assembly from 1769 to 1775, then in the convention that succeeded the assembly and that elected delegates to the First Continental Congress, and finally in the congress that succeeded the convention, of which he was elected president in August 1775. He had been an officer in the French and Indian War, fighting in Canada; in the Revolutionary War, fighting at the Battle of Brooklyn, he was captured, suffered an amputation, and died (September 1776).

This past spring the voters of Orange County elected you a delegate to the state ratifying convention meeting in Poughkeepsie to accept or reject the Constitution. Orange County is Antifederalist territory, and you ran on the Antifederalist ticket, receiving the most votes of any delegate. 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.
