

# The Price of Freedom

As we prepare to celebrate Independence Day on Saturday, do you wonder what happened to the founding fathers of our nation – those 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence? It is appropriate to consider the enormous sacrifices of the individuals who gave birth to this nation. Their courage came at great price:

- Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died.
- Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned.
- Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured.
- Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor.
- What kind of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners; men of means, well-educated, but they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured.
- Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.
- Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.
- Vandals or soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Rutledge and Middleton.
- At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson Jr. noted that the British general, Cornwallis, had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. He quietly urged Gen. George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt.
- Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.
- John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year, he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished.

Freedom? It is never free.

What price are you willing to pay to secure it?

– Beecher Hunter