

Moderate

Peter Vrooman

Albany City and County

Born: March 20, 1736

You are Colonel Peter Vrooman (sometimes "Vroman," and sometimes with a "Van"), born March 20, 1736. Two tales are told of you and your family.

Early in the war, probably 1775, you were a member of the committee of safety, the executive arm of the Provincial Congress, itself an interim government running New York between 1775 and 1777 when, with the ratification of the Constitution, it was formally constituted as a state. A meeting of the committee was scheduled at your residence. Tory loyalists had offered a reward for your capture, and a small party of abductors had secreted themselves around the house, expecting to seize you after the others had left. But you luckily left with them, and the plot was foiled.

More tragically and gruesomely was the massacre of your extended family in the summer of 1780. The Vrooman clan settled in and around Schoharie, in the Mohawk River Valley of Tryon County (now Montgomery) west of Albany. On August 10 a band of seventy-three Indians and five Tories descended on the valley's scattered farms, protected by a series of forts. You chanced to be at Middle Fort. Had you been where you were then residing, at the home of a relative, you would not have survived the attack, for one party of hostiles targeted the house specifically in the hope of killing a rebel colonel. Those outside the forts—men, women, and children—were tomahawked and scalped; those spared instant slaughter, for whatever reason, were captured and taken to Niagara and then to Montreal. A year later the survivors were exchanged for other prisoners. Deposited at the head of Lake Champlain, they made their way on foot back to Schoharie, arriving on August 30, 1781. Because you were inside the safety of a fort when the attack occurred, your reputation suffered with the locals, but not with the soldiers of the Fifteenth Albany Regiment, who lauded your courage and decisiveness.

Indeed, your standing among the voters of Albany must have recovered and soared, for you have repeatedly been elected to the state assembly and state senate. And this past spring, they elected you a delegate to the New York State Ratifying Convention assembling in Poughkeepsie to accept or reject the Constitution. Albany is Antifederalist territory, and you ran 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.