

MODERATE

Nicholas Low

New York City and County

Born: March 30, 1739, Raritan Landing, New Jersey

You are a merchant mainly, not a soldier or politician. You are Nicholas Low, born March 30, 1739, to Cornelius Low Jr. and Johanna Gouverneur Low in Raritan Landing, New Jersey. Your two sisters married two brothers, Hugh and Alexander Wallace, and with them you established Low & Wallace in New York City, an import-export business dealing in dry goods, salt, gunpowder, wine, and farm produce (1774). Your older brother, Isaac, was more successful than you, with a career in prerevolutionary politics. He was a delegate to the Stamp Act Congress (1765); head of a committee of inspection (1768); chair of the Committee of Fifty-One, which elected delegates to the First Continental Congress; and himself a member of the New York delegation. But he declined to stand for election to the Second Continental Congress because independence was the issue and his interests and loyalties tied him to England. He became a loyalist and stayed in the city during the British occupation (1776–83). When the British departed, he went with them, as did your brothers-in-law, the Wallaces. After the war, and as the only Low remaining, you came into your own, with sufficient wealth to buy stock in the Bank of New York and sufficient prestige to serve on its board of directors (starting in 1784), where you are to this day.

You entered the political arena only this year. The voters of New York County elected you simultaneously to the state assembly and to the state ratifying convention meeting in Poughkeepsie to accept or reject the Constitution. New York is Federalist territory, and you ran on the Federalist ticket. But you received the fewest votes of any Federalist candidate, perhaps because you are less fervent than the other eight. Indeed, you are a Moderate, respectful of Antifederalists who want to condition ratification on amendments to the Constitution.

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 opposing 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.