

Dirck Swart

Albany City and County

Born: May 17, 1734, Dutchess County

You are Dirck Swart (not the loveliest of names), born May 17, 1734, son of Teunis Swart, in Dutchess County, New York. The family moved to Schenectady, Albany County. You moved on to Stillwater and built a house to surprise your wife, Jannetje Vanderzee, whom you married in 1758. (The house still stands— indeed, you are more famous for the house than for anything else!)

Your political activism began relatively early, in 1766, when you signed up with the Albany Sons of Liberty. Then you altered course and in 1770 took a position of justice of the peace under royal authority, which you held until 1772. Several years later you changed course yet again with election to the first Provincial Congress, an extra-legal junta that replaced the defunct colonial assembly when British authority was collapsing in 1775. During the war you didn't serve, but you did provide General Philip Schuyler the use of your home as a headquarters.

You stayed clear of elective politics (or it stayed clear of you) until this year, when the voters of Albany County elected you a delegate 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. 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.