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Detailed Delegate Attendance Table From Farrand’s Records of The Federal Convention (May 25, 1787-September 17, 1787)

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DETAILED DELEGATE ATTENDANCE TABLE
UPDATING FARRAND’S RECORDS OF
THE FEDERAL CONVENTION
(MAY 25, 1787-SEPTEMBER 17, 1787)
2 OCL 100

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ABSTRACT.
Fifty-five delegates (appointed by twelve states) attended (at least one day) of the 1787 federal constitutional convention at Philadelphia. The first day of business was held May 25, 1787. Twenty-nine delegates attended the session on that day, the low-water mark during the entire convention. Forty-five delegates attended on June 15, the high-point for delegate appearances. Our Constitutional Logic updates the attendance data, which was last surveyed in Farrand's Records, 3 Farrand 586-590 (rev. ed. 1937).

KEY WORDS. federal convention; delegates at Philadelphia.

A. INTRODUCTION. Farrand’s Table, titled “Attendance of Delegates,” appears as Appendix B in his Volume 3; how many of the 55 delegates (appearing once) in any one of the 74 days from May 25 through September 17th, inclusive. Monthly counts (on which delegates gathered) are 5, 21, 19, 20, and 9, for May through August, respectively. Lapses in counting and disputes over the appearance of various delegates, especially Alexander Hamilton, have inspired further research.

David Kimball is one of the legendary ‘diggers’ of his generation, a leader in the research effort centered at Independence National Park in Philadelphia. (America concerns itself with its constitutional history at stated times; the run-up to 1987 furnished such an opportunity.)

Now retired, Mr. Kimball has devoted considerable energy over the last three years to survey the attendance information which is tabled herewith.

B. THE METHODOLOGY. The framework for the computation is supplied by reference to Survey of Quorum Requirements of Twelve State Delegations at Philadelphia (Based on State Credentials Tendered), 2 OCL 105. If a state was counted by Jackson (for example, in one of the 569 tabled votes in the text of Vol. 1 or Vol. 2 of Farrand’s Records), then at least the minimum (=quorum requirement satisfied) number of delegates were present on that day. From there it is a matter of investigation in the
available historical records and sound conjecture as to the presence or absence of the delegates. The indeterminacies (noted by ?s) indicate that P or A is yet unresolved.

The scope of the problem is posed by counting P or A for 55 x 74; this totals 4,070 potential appearances. The problem is thrown into some relief by Mr. Kimball's computation that only 36 ‘?s’ need be assigned, which makes the unknown less than 1%. A cursory review of Farrand’s questionable assignments in his biographically centered narrative of delegate attendance – ‘probably’ jockeys with (a given delegate’s) departure in the ‘latter’ part of a given month – shows that historians have made a lot of progress during the 1980s. Farrand would not dispute this point. “The sources of information are so readily found that references have been omitted ...”

Going beyond the low-hanging fruit required a three-week effort in searching, among other resources available, pay-records in the various state archives, to locate charges for per diem and reimbursables for delegates, or to determine the unavailability of this resource.

C. RHODE ISLAND CONSIDERED. Rhode Island did not send delegates. It was regarded as a ‘rogue’ state whose contumacious attitude had prevented necessary amendments to the Articles.

It became clear in the spring of 1787 that Rhode Island would not supply voices in opposition to the construction of a new federal regime. This elevated the chances that the twelve states could successfully ‘secede’ from the organization typically referenced by its organic charter, the Articles of Confederation.

This truculence Madison summed up as the “absurdity of subjecting the fate of twelve states to the perverseness or corruption of a thirteenth.” The Federalist No. 40, quoted in 3 Farrand 257 at Item 174.

What rankled was Rhode Island’s virulently self-promoting exercise of its (Articles of Confederation secured) ‘one-state-one-veto.’ In this regard it is in order to quote from Alexander Hamilton’s Federalist No. 7, titled ‘Concerning Dangers from Dissensions Between the States.’

Laws in violation of private contracts, as they amount to aggressions on the rights of those States whose citizens are injured by them, may be considered as another probable source of hostility. We are not authorized to expect that a more liberal or more equitable spirit would preside over the legislations of the individual States hereafter, if unrestrained by any additional checks, than we have heretofore seen in too many instances disgracing their several codes. We have observed the disposition to retaliation excited in Connecticut in consequence of the enormities perpetrated by the Legislature of Rhode Island; and we reasonably infer that, in similar cases, under other circumstances, a war, not of PARCHMENT, but of the sword, would chastise such atrocious breaches of moral obligation and social justice.
A letter from Rhode Island’s business community arrived and was read to the Philadelphia convention on May 28. Farrand’s Records quotes the letter in full at 3 Farrand 18-19. The petitioners represent that if the Philadelphia convention will adopt a new constitution to “strengthen the Union, promote Commerce, and increase the power & Establish the Credit of the United States” that the undersigned “Merchants [and] Tradesmen” will exert themselves to obtain Rhode Island’s consent to such “Effectual Arrangements.”

D. RESOURCES. For the Table Annexed hereto and for on-line access to Peter J. Aschenbrenner’s articles, tables and charts see purdue.academia.edu/PeterAschenbrenner or works.bepress.com/peter_aschenbrenner/

E. NOTES TO TABLE. Pending a more complete listing of references, the following must suffice.

1. Oliver Ellsworth left the convention early but supported the constitution at Connecticut’s ratification convention.
2. George Wythe left the convention early due to his wife’s illness. He supported the constitution in the Virginia ratification convention.
3. Edmund Randolph refused to sign the Constitution but supported the ratification of it at Virginia’s ratification convention.
4. William Richardson Davie left the convention early but supported the Constitution at both of North Carolina’s ratification conventions.
5. Caleb Strong left the convention early due to an illness in his family but supported the constitution in Massachusetts’s ratification convention.
6. William Pierce left the convention early to attend to business in New York, but publicly he voiced support for the new constitution.

F. LINKS. There are no known on-line sources with comparable information.


H. CITATION FORMAT PREFERRED. Please cite as 2 Our Constitutional Logic 100 or 2 OCL 100.

I. SERVER LOCATION. This file is maintained on the I/D server.

J. LAST REVISED. This file was last revised on July 29, 2014; it is ver 023.
K. **FILE FORMAT.** The format of this file is MS Word 2010; the format of the associated table is also MS Word 2010.

L. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.** Grateful acknowledgement is hereby made to Professor Gordon Lloyd, School of Public Policy, Pepperdine University who (along with David Kimball) conducted research upon which this article is based.