

~A DISSERTATION

on the MANNER OF ACQUIRING

The Character & Privileges

of a **CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES**

by David Ramsay; Printed 1789

(a modernized and corrected version
with remarks by Adrien Nash Feb./ Aug. 2014)

The united States are a new nation, or political society, [*right off the bat we encounter a different frame of reference from our own, with attention being paid, not to a central government or national name but to a country composed of separate nations united in a compact of close alliance.*] formed at first by the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, out of those British subjects in America who were thrown out of royal protection by act of Parliament, passed in December, 1775.

[*That act in effect meant that the Americans were no longer considered British subjects like all others who were under the sovereign protection of the United Kingdom but instead, like rejected step-children, were still required to do their chores and support the household, via stiff taxes and oppressive regulation.*]

A CITIZEN of the United States means a member of this new nation. [*“a member”, -as of a connected group, like a family, or clan or tribe of people with a common connection, typically by bloodline or common nativity.*]

~Besides the principle of government being radically changed by the revolution, the political character of the people was also changed from subjects to CITIZENS. The difference is immense.

[*Never having lived as subjects, we fail to comprehend how immense it is, especially in the colonists' case, after they were, in effect, disowned by Parliament as Englishmen and dispossessed of many of*

the rights of Englishmen. -Take note of reference to “the political character” having changed.

There is a big difference between the origin of nationality in the two different worlds. The original version was; “I’m an Englishman, -a subject of the Crown”, being replaced by “I’m an American, a subject of no one. I do not ‘have’ citizenship. But like a British subject who *is* a subject, and doesn’t “have” subject-ship, I similarly *am* a CITIZEN not because of what I “have” but because of what I am.” In the U.S. “*having*” citizenship is a fundamentally flawed concept vis a vis *natural* citizenship. ~]

“Subject” is derived from the Latin words; sub and jacio, and means one who is under the power of another; but a CITIZEN is a *unit* of a mass of free people, who, together, possess the whole of SOVEREIGNTY.

Subjects look up to a MASTER, but citizens are so entirely *equal*, -that none have hereditary rights superior to others.

Each citizen of a free State contains, within himself, -by nature and the Constitution, as much of the common sovereignty as another.

[*That speaks of the doctrine of CITIZENSHIP EQUALITY.* Whether rich or poor, new or multi-generational, well educated or poorly educated, all citizens were identical members of the nation in the view of American Natural philosophy. Like a bee hive without a queen bee; everyone is identical. No classes of superior & inferior citizens.

That view is derived from humanity’s common origin, -being descendant not of *different* races of Man but of only one race, all having the same original parents and thus all being the same. The British also embraced that view regarding the common subjects who were not nobles or royals. They were considered to have full equality no matter what the origin of their British citizenship was (subject-born, native-born, naturalized, or recog-

nized by statute (the foreign-born). People were viewed as being in different social classes but not in different nationality classes since all were equal before the law no matter what their position in society was. ~]

In the eyes of Reason and Philosophy, the political condition of CITIZENS is more exalted than that of noblemen. Dukes and Earls are the creatures of Kings, and may be made by them at their pleasure: but citizens possess, in their own right, original SOVEREIGNTY.

There is also a great difference between citizens and inhabitants -or residents. Any person living within a country or state is an inhabitant of it, or resident *in* it.

Negroes are inhabitants but not citizens. [as were some citified Indians] Citizenship confers a right of voting at elections, and many other privileges not enjoyed by those who are no more than inhabitants.

The precise difference may be thus stated: The CITIZEN of a free State is so united to it as to possess an individual's proportion of the common sovereignty; but he who is only an inhabitant, or resident, has no further connection with the State in which he resides than its umbrella of security for his person and property in accord with its fixed laws, without any participation in its government.

[That speaks of the positional status of immigrants and transient foreigners. Neither were under the duty of citizenship and had no mandatory connection to the nation. There was an across-the-board disqualification regarding the civic rights and duties of citizens, but not the protections.

That position of the nation continued onward until the Civil War when vast numbers of soldiers were needed, and the government turned to immigrants to help fill the ranks. They were members of American society and were thus obligated to defend their adopted nation in time of war.

That duty was never directly put into writing but it was adopted at that time as U.S. policy. Of course the immigrant male was free to leave the country, -but he would likely not be allowed back in after the war was over.

That was their right because they were still subjects of a foreign power even though that power could not be exercised over them in the U.S.

Socially, they were domiciled members of American society, but *legally* they were still aliens owing allegiance to a foreign king or government.

Out of necessity, the government chose to order their participation in the war based on their social membership, and ignore their political non-membership and foreign membership.

But in the citizenship case of Wong Kim Ark in 1898, the Supreme Court ruled against previous Supreme Court holdings, as well as the stated intent and meaning of the words of the 14th Amendment, written three decades earlier.

But those words were ambiguous enough that they could apply a different meaning to them, -to what it means to be subject to the sovereign jurisdiction of the American government.

It had always appeared, until the Civil War draft, that foreigners were either fully subject to American national authority after taking the oath of Allegiance & Renunciation to become citizens, or they were fully subject to the foreign nation in which they were still a member. But by drafting them into the war, a new middle-ground gray area was created based on the British doctrine of temporary allegiance to the authority of the land of one's domicile.

That temporary allegiance was an obligation in return for all of the benefits and protections of the laws and forces of their adopted new American residence.

That gray area in which they had serious obligations but no political rights resulted in a gift to such immigrant fathers when the Supreme Court ruled that their permanent residency came with an inference that they were subject to the full authority of

Washington D.C., as the 14th Amendment requires, and therefore any child born to them in America was therefore deemed to be a 14th Amendment citizen.

Its opinion in 1898 resulted in citizenship for the native-born of alien fathers who were then, in effect, openly considered subject to the full authority of the United States government even though not by actual statute. But the court's opinion served as a substitute for an actual statute.

By deciding and overtly stating that alien-born children in America were U.S. Citizens, they were in effect, covertly also stating that it was because they met the two requirements of the 14th Amendment; namely birth in the U.S. and subjection to U.S. authority.

Since babies are not subject to governments, the vague and ambiguous language of the amendment had to be taken to be in reference to *inherited* subjection that one was born under, -via being born to a father who was fully subject.

If he was fully subject, then he certainly could be drafted, and his child should certainly be provided citizenship in the nation of its birth and probable up-bringing, -a nation for which the father may die in battle.

Who was not fully subject to that authority? Transient visitors & guests from abroad, as well as ambassadors, Native Americans, and vagabonds with no permanent domicile anywhere. So when the nation was founded, no foreigner was viewed as fully subject, including those described by Ramsay as having no connection to the citizenship responsibilities of American men, namely resident foreigners who were all free from shouldering the obligation to support the function and defense of the government and nation.

The government did not accept them as obligated, -nor as citizens because they were neither. That would require a willful choice to become an American. Many did not make that choice.

But after the Supreme Court declared their native-born children to be citizens, then they found that they

had no choice when it came to the primal obligation to defend one's own home, land, country, or nation (which one had adopted with, or without, citizenship). ~]

Ramsay continued:

Republics, both ancient and modern, have been possessive of the rights of citizenship. The new Constitution carries this matter so far as to require not only present citizenship in Representatives and Senators, but prior citizenship for the term of seven and nine years. [*for Senate candidates for the first Congress, that meant they had to have become Americans by 1780*]

The time and manner of acquiring the high character of a CITIZEN of the United States is therefore quite worthy of public discussion.

The following appear to be the only modes of acquiring this distinguishing privilege:

[*It was definitely distinguishing because there were no other national citizens on Earth but U.S. citizens. All of humanity was subject to dictators & kings.*]

1st. By being parties to the original compact,
The Declaration of Independence.

2nd. By taking an OATH OF FIDELITY to some one of the united States according to law.

[*Silently being party to the declaration was not enough. One was forced to take sides, openly before all. -"With us" or "against us". Now swear on your honor, before God & man, your allegiance, your dedication and fidelity to our State and its cause without limits. Liberty or death.*]

3rd. By tacit consent and acquiescence.

[*That describes one's uncontested acceptance of their new national character. Before victory, a minor who reached maturity during the war might not acquiesce to the rejection of his British subjectship resulting from his father's pledge of allegiance to the revolution.*]

4th. By birth or inheritance.

[somewhat "tacitly" uncontestable following the victory over the British. Those born after the victory were no longer capable of being born as or viewed as British subjects. They were born being a citizen of the sovereign State of their birth through their citizen-father whose character they inherited.]

5th. By adoption. *[naturalization?]*

Of each of these in their order:

1st. By the Declaration of Independence Congress proclaimed to the world, that their constituents, "the People of the united colonies, were absolved from all allegiance to the Crown of England," and that the late colonies were "free and Independent States."

For the support of this bold measure, they confederated together, by pledging to each other "their LIVES, FORTUNES, and SACRED HONOR."

[They bound themselves to each other with chains of sworn undying loyalty, as blood brothers in the blood that would have to be shed. They put themselves on a one-way street, which held, up ahead, either Liberty or Destruction; -either defeat, imprisonment & death, -or Victory and Independence.

There were no side streets and no turning around. Surrender as an option could be a fate worse than death. It was either "Onward to Victory!" or forward to the gallows.]

~By this eventful declaration, "a nation was born in a day." Nearly three millions of people who had been subjects, became CITIZENS.

[That was something mankind had not seen since the Romans overthrew their Etruscan masters who had subjugated them for ages, -2,000 years earlier.]

~Their former political connection with George III was done away, [just like the cutting of an umbilical cord] and a new one was formed, not with another king, but *among themselves*, by which they became CO-EQUAL CITIZENS, and, collectively,

assumed all the rights of SOVEREIGNTY.

[Under the monarch, the lines of connection to others was not direct, but through their direct connection of subjection to the king. He was like the hub of a wheel to which the individual spokes are attached.

With independence, there was no more hub. The lines of connection changed from being all centered on an all-important individual to being centered on only... the Constitution?

It was still unwritten and unimagined. Instead, their bonds of attachment were to each other directly because they all became co-responsible to defeat the British and achieve Independence for their allied sovereign States.

Also of major note is "all the rights of SOVEREIGNTY". One of those rights which only the sovereign (the king of Britain) possessed was the right of any children born abroad to him or his ambassadors to be recognized as members of the nation even though not born on its soil.

That right was then assumed by the Americans as their natural right. Thereafter it did not matter where the child of an American father was born, -it was automatically deemed a fellow natural citizen of the nation via its father's sovereign right to pass his national membership to his progeny. ~]

As this was done by the Representatives of the people of this country, and in their name, and on their behalf, all who had concurred in investing Congress with power, acquired citizenship, by being parties to this solemn act. [of severing ties]

These original citizens were THE FOUNDERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

[We need to always bear in mind that there was no passivity possible for those who compacted together for liberty-or-death. They were the founders because they dared to defy an empire. They took democracy where it had never gone before. Their positive concurrence with the authority and final

decision of those they choose to represent them bound them in a mutual liberation pact or mutual suicide pact. They would either fulfill it by emerging alive and free or they were not getting out alive or not punished to the maximum. ~]

CITIZENSHIP could not be acquired in this way by absentees from America for two reasons;

1st. They were not thrown out of British protection by the restraining act of Parliament, and therefore continued as British subjects, -under the obligations and in quiet possession of their presumed British allegiance.

And, such foreign residents could not be parties to the declaration of the Continental Congress. The members of that body were not their deputies or agents, and therefore could not bind them nor act for them.

2nd. To cement the people of America more firmly together, OATHS of FIDELITY to the STATES were administered soon after the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE to all above a certain age.

By these oaths, a compact was established between the STATE and the individuals; and those who took them acquired or confirmed their CITIZENSHIP by their own personal act.

By swearing to do the DUTY of CITIZENS, they, by law, acquired a *right* to the privileges and protections of CITIZENS. Those who refused, were ordered to depart, as being persons unfriendly to the revolution. [some choose security, obedience, and subservience over danger, rebellion and liberty.]

3rd. As the war neared its end, the administration of oaths, being less necessary, was less frequent. Citizenship was then, and now is, daily acquired by tacit consent or acquiescence.

[E. Vattel (a major influence on the rebels) observed in *The Law of Nations* (1758): “The country of the fathers is therefore that of the children; and these become true citizens merely by their tacit consent. We shall soon see whether, on their coming to the

years of discretion, they may renounce their right and what they owe to the society in which they were born. (“were raised” is preferable)

I say, that, in order to be *of* the country, it is necessary that a person be born *of a father* who is a citizen; for, if one is born there of a foreigner, it will be only the place of his birth, and not his country.”

[The father determined his son’s identity and nationality, -not the soil. Notice he ignores native birth in his mention of what is necessary for a person to be “*of*” a country. ~]

Minors who were not old enough to be parties to the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, or to take the oath of FIDELITY to their State at the time they were imposed, became citizens as a result of their continuing to reside in the united States after they reached adulthood, especially if at the same time they claimed the protection and performed the *duties* of citizens.

[This statement is packed with significance that is easily overlook, -as I did initially. The first thing of significance is that if a minor emigrated to or moved back to Britain during or following the war, he was thereby recognized as being a British subject and not an American (unless, I assume, the move was only temporary to attend college).

One could not be both British and American because neither nation allowed dual-nationality. A second thing is that such minors were not actually citizens in any real sense until they reached the age of maturity. They were American subjects, via subjection to their father. Only adult men were fully CITIZENS. Wives and children were attachments, not unlike property, making them U.S. Nationals, with women having civil rights (inheritance, due process, right to sue, etc. but not civic rights, (the right to vote or serve in public office and on juries).

Thirdly, there was no law that delineated the rules of national membership because there was no national government to write such a law. People were recognized as citizens (or not) based purely on the facts regarding them, or on State Constitutions and statutes. (No U.S. natural nationality law has ever been written).

Their children were citizens via fathers who became citizens by their solemn oath of allegiance to the revolution, and their renunciation of all loyalty and obedience to their foreign dictator. Those fathers, (-the founders) were citizens by solemn oath. Their children were citizens by inheritance, -by bloodline descent.

Citizenship did not attach to that first generation of American minors until either victory or their reaching adulthood and choosing to not emigrate to Britain with other loyalists who were not welcome to stay. Of those who stayed and assumed the role of citizen, it was “a given” that they were fellow citizens, -in the absence of any law making it so other than the law of fraternal unity. ~]

At twenty-one years of age, every freeman is at liberty to choose his country, his religion, and his allegiance. Those who continued after that age in the allegiance, under which they have been educated, become, by tacit consent, either subjects or citizens, as the case may be.

[In the eyes of the British, they had no such right since by British doctrine subjects were born with a national character that they could not shed, making them subjects for life under the doctrine of perpetual allegiance. ~]

In this manner, young men are now daily acquiring citizenship, without the intervention of an oath. [Note that young women are not included. That is because they carried the nationality of either their father or their husband (who was their head once they gave themselves to him and took his name via the marriage vow of obedience and fidelity). ~]

Note that in order for young men to acquire citizenship in this way, their residence following the revolution is indispensably necessary, -before the beginning of their citizenship. For no man can be said to accept by tacit consent the citizenship of a government under which he has never lived.

Citizenship, when acquired in this tacit way by an absentee at the time of the Declaration of Independence, can therefore only be dated from the time in which the claimant of that high privilege became a resident under the independent government of the State of which he claims to be a citizen.

[Wow! I never expected I'd ever read such words although I suspected they were reflective of the view at that time. “*independent* government of the State” speaks to the status quo of that founding era in which each nation-state was an independent sovereign nation although bound to others by a charter of alliance of some centralized powers, but mostly possessing equal, separate, independent rights.

“of which he claims to be a citizen” reveals that CITIZENSHIP was essentially and directly a State issue, a State allegiance, and that did not change until long after the Civil War. General Robert E. Lee and all Southerners felt their first and foremost allegiance was to their homeland, -the nation-State of their birth and upbringing.

Even though he was a graduate of West Point, and had fought valiantly in the Mexican-American War, his nation came second to his country, which was Virginia, -not the Union.

The office of President required one to be “a natural born citizen” of... their home State (which was where their citizenship was based).]

~4th. None can claim citizenship **as a birth-right** except those who have been born since the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE, for this obvious reason: no man can be *born a citizen* of a

State or government which did not exist at the time of his birth.

CITIZENSHIP is the *inheritance of the children* of those who have taken a part in the late revolution; but this is confined exclusively to **the children of those who were themselves citizens.**

[Wow! That is not a smoking gun... like I've been searching for since 2010, but is an unmistakable *firing* gun. It is incontrovertible proof about the nature and origin of natural citizenship. It is *not*, as the "native-birth" proponents deceitfully proclaim, based solely on nativity. Instead it is solely a result of *inheritance* by descent from citizen fathers.

It also destroys the claim of their opposition that it is nativity *plus* descent that makes a natural born citizen. Rather, the fat lady has now sung and it is inescapably clear that national citizenship by natural membership is via nothing other than Natural Law. Nativity is not related to it. Nativity is strictly tangential, collateral, coincident and proximal to it, but not *causative* nor integral.

The game is over. We can dismantle the tent and go home. The issue is settled. The "native-born = natural born" fools have not a foot of ground to stand on, -nor do the "native-born *plus* natural-born" crowd.

The "three legged stool" doctrine is defunct. Like humans, only two legs are needed. Have you ever seen a primate that needed three legs? Natural Law certainly has not. By it, one only needs two parents of the same nature in order to be what they are.

No off-spring needs to be born in a certain place in order to "inherit" its nature. That fallacy is pure foolishness no matter who promulgates it, (and there are plenty who do).

"But it just sounds too good to *not* be true", and so they embrace it as if it *is* true, -like a rational and idealistic religious doctrine. But nature doesn't care about anyone's doctrine. Its laws are what they are,

immutable and unchanging. "Like" gives birth to like. Americans give birth to Americans. Citizens give birth to citizens... on Earth, -or on the Moon. It's "a given". It's a natural fact. ~]

Those who died before the Revolution could leave no political character to their children but that which they themselves possessed, -namely that of subjects. If they had lived, no one could be certain whether they would have adhered to the King or to Congress. Their children, therefore, may claim by inheritance the rights of British subjects, but not of AMERICAN CITIZENS.

5th. Persons born in any country may have acquired citizenship by legal adoption by legal means. The citizenship of such persons must be dated from the time of their adoption.

[In some countries, "naturalization" is akin to legal adoption, but not in the United States. Here it is akin to the genetic replacement that happens via a bone marrow transplant. Under the American doctrine of CITIZENSHIP EQUALITY, all national members (citizens) are *natural* members; -*natural* citizens, including the naturalized members.

Like the bone marrow recipient, all of their original bone marrow is killed (equivalent to taking the Oath of Allegiance and Renunciation) and then new marrow from a donor is seeded into the bones, resulting in a new and different type of bone marrow.

It's not so drastic with various other nations, such a Mexico, because they don't view their "naturalized" citizens as having lost their old original national membership. Consequently, Mexico does not allow them to serve in the military, as police, mayors, governors, legislators, judges or President.

They do not adhere to our philosophy of *Citizenship Equality*. They have two or more classes of citizens. We have only one. ~]

~From these observations, the following inferences result:

Citizenship is an adventitious character to every adult in the united States; and there was a certain period in the lives of the first generation of liberated Americans when they ceased to be subjects, and began to be citizens.

[There is no transition period where one is a citizen of two countries. Instead it is “BOOM”, -one day you are what you’ve been all of your life, and the next that is vanished and you are something all together different.

Like an infant who one minute is ensconced in the womb, and the next is out and cut off from its only previous existence.

It, at that moment, officially becomes “a person”. Or a bride and groom who are as single as they’ve always been until the binding vows are spoken. Then presto! They are husband & wife for life, -like the newly naturalized person becomes an American for life. ~]

The [U.S.] citizenship of no man could be previous to the Declaration of Independence, [only colony citizens & royal subjects preceded it] and, as a **natural right**, belongs to none but those who have been *born of citizens* since the 4th of July, 1776.

[just for the sake of added emphasis:

BORN OF CITIZENS!!! not “born in America”]

~But to proceed with inferences; From the premises already established, it may be further inferred that **citizenship by inheritance**, belongs to none but the children of those Americans, who having survived the War of Independence, acquired that adventitious character in their own right, and **transmitted it to their offspring**.

The children of those who died before the revolution, who were not citizens, must have acquired that privilege in their own right, and by their own personal act; that is, by joining their country at or since the revolution. [Native-birth to colonists did not confirm citizenship because it was only transmitted via one’s *father*; -inherited membership un-

related to nativity or geographical boundaries at birth. ~]

~Citizenship, acquired by passive consent, is exclusively confined to the cases of persons who have lived within the United States since the Declaration of Independence, and could not have begun before their actual residence under their new and independent governments. [plural]

From the whole it’s clear that no private individual, *tho’ a native*, who was absent from this country at the time independence was declared, could have acquired citizenship with the United States before his returning and actually joining his countrymen following the beginning of the revolution.

Dangerous consequences would follow from holding that before the Declaration of Independence *birth and residence* in the nation now called the United States, were sufficient to confer the rights of citizenship on persons who were absent during the late war, before they returned to their native country.

If this should be established, many persons *hostile to our liberties and independence* might put in their claim to be citizens.

All the children born in the interval between the peace of Paris, 1763, and the DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE in 1776, within the British posts on our north-western frontier now wrongfully held from us, would be citizens.

Our East-India trade would be laid open to many adventurers who have contributed nothing towards the establishment of our liberties: for the natives of this country, born before the revolution, who are now *dispersed over the world*, might, on that principle, fit out ships, make voyages to India, come here and sell their goods under the character of citizen, from the circumstance of their *having been born among us* thirty or forty years ago, and return with the net proceeds of their cargoes, to their present residence in foreign countries.

[No devotion to native-birth citizenship existed because the rebellion demolished the birth-based

unity of identity under the king. Once the rebellion was launched, one's American identity and belonging were determined by one's actions and one's oath. Native-birth as a unifying bond ended. Many natives were treasonous loyalist, and many foreigners were patriots, (-as was one of my ancestors).]

These, and many other consequences, injurious to the liberties and commerce of these States, would result from admitting the dangerous position that *birth and residence* in this country before the revolution, conferred citizenship on absentees, before their return after the revolution. FINIS

His focus in all that he wrote regarding native-birth and citizenship was in the context of national citizenship, national membership as a citizen of The United States of America. But what he overlooked was citizenship within the sovereign States of America.

They each had their own citizenship, and laws regarding it. Most of them continued to support the age-old common law practice of ascribing citizenship to children of immigrants. Such citizenship was diametrically opposed to the national citizenship whose origin Ramsay explained. What he illuminated was the founding generation and the nationality of their children.

Their children were born as natural citizens, but the case that prompted Ramsay to write his Dissertation was not about national citizenship but State citizenship and its origin. By their on-going custom and law, the native-born colony subjects who were children of subjects became State citizens automatically unless they rejected allegiance to America and embraced loyalty to Britain.

Parents who died before the Declaration could do neither, so the question was in regard to a son of such deceased colonists who was absent from America while studying in Britain during the War.

Neither he nor his parents ever swore allegiance to the Revolution and were never under the authority

of the independent government of their State. Thus neither was a party to what made one a citizen of the United States.

Ramsay argued that such a son could not be viewed as a citizen of the United States, while his opponents argued that by inheritance, he was a natural member of the society of his parents' colony and therefore could not be disenfranchised from his birth-right inclusion in the new nation-state which that colony turned into.

Thus, they were arguing in favor of his natural State citizenship while Ramsay was arguing against his natural *national* citizenship.

They were on two different pages and both were simultaneously correct because national sovereignty was one matter, while State sovereignty was another. Neither could trump the other because there was no authority to enforce superiority of one over the other.

That fact goes almost entirely unnoticed in all of the talk about citizenship, -failing to grasp that there were in fact two types of citizenship, State, and National. All State citizens were "Americans" but not all Americans were "citizens of The United States", even though they might be a citizen of "the united STATES of America".

All States had to recognize national citizenship, but the national government was not required to recognize all State citizenship. If a State naturalized foreigners or Blacks who did not meet the criteria of the national rule passed by Congress, then they would not be considered as Citizens of the United States and the other States were no compelled to recognize them either. No slave State was going to recognize an African or one of African descent as being a citizen of the State or nation. For most Americans, their State citizenship was all that mattered since that was where they lived.

by Adrien Nash Feb/ August 2014
Obama-nation.com

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
David Ramsay, Historian (1749-1815)
President of the South Carolina Senate
In office 1792–1797
Alma mater Princeton University
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Occupation Physician, Historian

David Ramsay was an American physician, public official, and historian from Charleston, South Carolina. He was one of the first major historians of the American Revolution.

During the American Revolutionary War he was, from 1776 to 1783, a member of the South Carolina legislature. When Charleston was threatened by the British in 1780, he served with the South Carolina militia as a field surgeon.

After the city was captured in 1780, Ramsay was imprisoned for nearly a year at St. Augustine, Florida, until he was exchanged.

From 1782 to 1786 he served in the Continental Congress. In the absence of John Hancock, Ramsay served as chairman of Congress, from November 23, 1785 to May 12, 1786.

In the 1790s he served three terms in the South Carolina State Senate, and was president of that body until retiring from public service. He was murdered in 1815 by a mentally ill man whom Ramsay had examined as a physician.

In his own day, Ramsay was better known as a historian and author than as a politician. He was one of the American Revolution's first major historians. Ramsay writes with the knowledge and insights acquired by being personally involved in the events of the American Revolution.

In 1785 he published in two volumes *History of the Revolution of South Carolina* (this was the first book to receive a copyright in the United States), in

1789 in two volumes *History of the American Revolution*, in 1807 *a Life of Washington*, and in 1809 in two volumes *a History of South Carolina*.

In 1789 he also wrote *A Dissertation on the Manners of Acquiring the Character and Privileges of a Citizen*. Ramsay was also the author of several minor works, including a memoir (1812) of his third wife Martha Laurens Ramsay, a well-educated woman who had served as a political hostess for her father, Henry Laurens, during the 1780s.

Ramsay's *History of the United States* in three volumes was published posthumously in 1816–1817, and forms the first three volumes of his *Universal History Americanized*, published in twelve volumes in 1819.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ramsay_%28historian%29