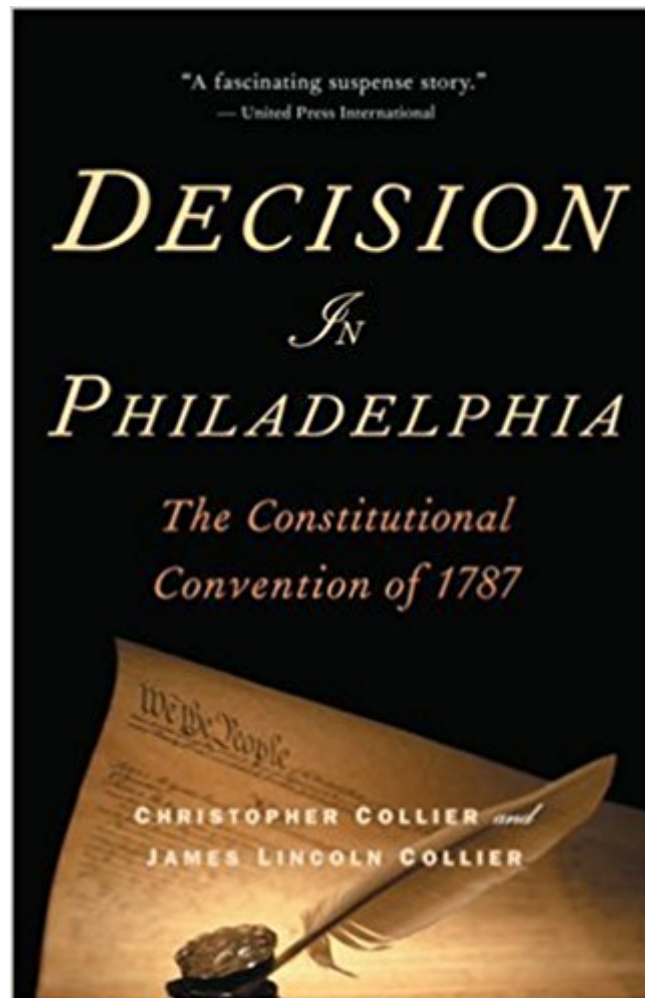




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# Decision In Philadelphia: The Constitutional Convention Of 1787



## Synopsis

Includes a complete copy of the Constitution. Fifty-five men met in Philadelphia in 1787 to write a document that would create a country and change a world. Here is a remarkable rendering of that fateful time, told with humanity and humor. "The best popular history of the Constitutional Convention available."--Library Journal From the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Christopher Collier is an author and historian. He attended Clark University and Columbia University, where he earned his PhD. He was the official Connecticut State Historian from 1984 to 2004 and is now professor of history emeritus at the University of Connecticut. He is the brother of James Lincoln Collier, with whom he has written a number of novels, most of which are based on historic events. His books have been nominated for several awards, including the Newbery Honor and the Pulitzer Prize.

A thorough treatment of the 88-days of the Constitutional Convention of 1787. This book was described as a "favorite" of Professor Akhil Reed Amar in the afterward of his book *America's Constitution: A Biography*. It is a probing look at the factors producing a need for a national government and the compromises that were made or deals that were struck in gaining the various consensus' needed to produce the final form of the constitution. The book is well written and easily followed. It is both serious history and great entertainment - a tough combination for most

authors. Professor Amar seems to minimize Shay's Rebellion as a factor in his book - while this book's authors, Christopher Collier and James Lincoln Collier observe, "Shay's Rebellion had made a difference..." (states began naming and sending delegations to the convention, Chapter-5). Charles Pinckney's contribution at the convention is magnified over the standing that many (most?) historians traditionally give to it. Pinckney's draft plan for a constitution was a serious draft that had major parts of it ultimately incorporated into the U.S. Constitution (Chapter-7). "Loathed" as he was by Madison - Pinckney's contribution may have been "diminished" in the record compiled by Madison! The research of historian Staughton Lynd is presented which lays out the case for a double-deal involving slavery that may have been coordinated jointly between the Confederation Congress in New York and the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia involving persons including: Hamilton, Mannasseh Cutler (The Ohio Land Co.), Franklin, Blount, Few, Pierce and others (Chapter-15). An historical hypothesis only... but backed-up with interesting coincidence and demonstrable interests. A lesser convention celebrity, Daniel of St Thomas Jenifer of Maryland, shows up late for a session allowing a vote to side with the "large states" thereby preventing rupture of the Convention (Chapter 13). He "strolls" into the room afterward - almost announcing non-coincidence. And ironically in Chapter 15, the authors observe, "...being a congressman was never expected to be a full time job" (loc. 2842). Who could keep a straight face for that? The authors (or is it the publisher?) have a strange sense of citation and notes. No superscript markers exist (in the e-book anyway) instead the reader may pour through an afterward section titled "Citations to Sources" where quotes used in the text are attributed - odd, awkward, and unsatisfying! Still - this book is a highly recommended read containing highlights not usually found in other, also very good, books that cover this same subject, e.g.: Stewart's *The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution*, or Bowen's *Miracle At Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitutional Convention May - September 1787* or Rossiter's *1787: The Grand Convention*.-----kindle edition-----Two or three typos or formatting errors - nothing serious. There are no page numbers - without which there is no good way to refer to the contents to non e-book readers. Instead of calculating pages we get how many "minutes left (to read) in the chapter or book" - a disappointing trade for more useful page numbers. And finally there IS an index, though not listed in the table of contents. Unfortunately most of the links from the index lead nowhere near the topic listed, as the kindle's word search will verify. e-Book publication quality for AudioGO publisher, *AudioGO* - mediocre.

I love history but have a hard time following a book when there are numerous facts, dates, and circumstances thrown at me. This book breaks down certain key individuals and made it very easy and entertaining to read. If you are interested in the constitutional convention and just why slavery was protected and women's rights not granted, read this. I have a better feeling about the US after reading this. Sure, the Founding Fathers made some mistakes but show me a perfect country and I'm certain you'll be on another planet. Great book!!!

Well worth the time and effort! Especially fascinating were the brief bios of the delegates. Also liked the author's approach of tracing an issue all the way from the beginning to the end, then rewinding to the beginning for the next issue.

I enjoyed the depth and insight this book offered into each of the significant participants of the convention. It seemed well researched and provided a depth to the conventions political considerations both broadly, and through the lens of the constitutions authors. I recommend this book.

Unfortunately relatively few Americans have even read the Constitution. Most think our system of checks and balances is something that was an obvious necessity and are not all that impressed with the Founding Fathers. When I read this book, I was amazed at the complex issues the delegates had to tackle. It explains the concerns of the various states and how the challenges were overcome. Most people have no idea that there were a number of issues that arose that could have been deal breakers. The book profiles the well-known participants, but also the unsung heroes who were very influential in the final outcome. It is an easy read generally, but it is important to keep track of all the players. Great book EVERY American should read.

The Colliers' book reads like a novel. It features: \*Major minibios of ten delegates, minor minibios of another fifteen or so. I particularly liked the one of Washington. Some of the minor ones I found distracting from the story line but they were effective in highlighting the personalities at the Convention. Several of the major minibios - Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Pinckney - occur in the first hundred pages, where the Colliers summarize the events that led up to the Convention. \*Importance of the rule that any item could at any time be readdressed. "Questions that had been voted on before could nevertheless be brought up again. Without this rule the Convention would have collapsed in the first week." \*How Madison managed to keep Pinckney's competing plan

out of the eventual historical limelight, despite the fact that much of Pinckney's plan ended up in the final product. "He managed to destroy the posthumous reputation of Charles Pinckney by selective reporting."\*How a series of compromises and back room deals gave the small states equal status in the Senate and kept them from walking out.\*Alliances & voting blocs: Alliance #1 - The Big Three (Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania) with The Deep South (Georgia and the two Carolinas). In their first bloc vote the "Virginia Plan" passed virtually without change, to the detriment of the small states. Alliance #2 - Connecticut and South Carolina, each of which usually drew votes from three other states. Connecticut got a free ride on shipping and trade issues in exchange for their votes favoring slavery.\*Chapter 15 features a mystery that "has been sleuthed out by historian Staughton Lynd" (pages 217-222). A hugely complex real estate/slavery deal, involving Convention delegates who were (simultaneously) delegates in their own states and/or in the existing Congress. The North got slavery barred from the Northwest Territory and limited the number of states that territory could be divided into. They also got the right to continue to speculate in Northwest Territory land deals. The South got the right to cross state lines when pursuing fleeing slaves, the 3/5's rule, and the North would not address slavery issues south of the Ohio river. "These men could not only find out what was going on in both bodies but also act as go-betweens, and perhaps more importantly, influence the proceedings in either....the conclusion is inescapable that once the big-state-small-state battle over proportional representation was settled, the major movement at the Constitutional Convention was a series of complex and intricately intermeshed deals struck between North and South with some of the most illustrious names in American history acting as negotiators."The Colliers' method made for easy reading: "The Constitutional Convention could not and did not proceed in a straight line, neatly disposing of one issue after the next until all were dealt with....it therefore does not make sense for us to attempt to study the Convention day by day. It will be far better to single out the major issues and follow them one at a time through the debates from beginning to end."I read a similar book, "The Summer of 1787: The Men Who Invented the Constitution" by David O. Stewart in 2008. That book had more detail, emphasized the workings of the various committees, and I enjoyed it immensely. "Decision in Philadelphia" is more into personalities, is harder to put down, and I highly recommend them both.

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