

Chief Justice Thomas McKean (M'Kean)
1734-1817

Term

July 28, 1777-December 17, 1799

Education

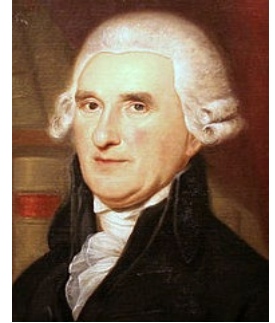
- Studied law under David Finney, New Castle, Delaware, 1750
- Admitted Middle Temple, London, in absentia as a special student

Professional Experience

- Admitted to the Delaware Courts, 1754; admitted to Chester County and Philadelphia County bars, 1754; Supreme Court of Province of Pennsylvania, 1758; Attorney at Law, New Jersey, June 1765; Solicitor and Counsellor at Law, New Jersey, October 31, 1766
- Deputy Attorney General, Sussex County, Delaware, 1756-1758
- Governor John Penn appointed McKean, Sole Notary and Tabellion Public for Lower Counties, July 10, 1765
- McKean, Caesar Rodney, George Read, Delaware Committee of Correspondence, June 5, 1765
- Governor John Penn appointed McKean, Justice of the Peace, Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions, and Orphans' Court, New Castle County, Delaware, July 10, 1765-1774
- Customs Collector, Port of New Castle, September 10, 1771
- Elected Delaware House of Assembly, 1762-1779; Speaker, 1772, 1773, 1776
- Delaware Delegate to Stamp Act Congress, October 7-19, 1765
- Committee of Correspondence for Lower Counties, October 23, 1773
- Elected Delaware Delegate to First Continental Congress, August 1, 1774
- Delaware Delegate, First Continental Congress, 1774
- Delaware Delegate, Second Continental Congress, 1775-1776
- Member, Philadelphia City Committee, 1774
- Elected Member, Delaware Constitutional Convention
- Member, Philadelphia City Committee of Observation and Inspection, August 1775, Chairman on August 18, 1775
- Delegate, Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, June 18-25, 1776
- Delegate, Federal Constitutional Convention, July 1776
- Colonel, 4th Battalion of Pennsylvania Associators, July 15-18, 1776
- Member, Delaware House of Assembly, 1776-1777, 1778-1789; Speaker, February 12, 1777-September 22, 1777
- Acting President, Delaware, September 22, 1777-October 20, 1777
- Delegate, Continental Congress, December 22, 1779-March 1, 1781
- President, Confederation Congress, March 1-November 4, 1781
- Delegate, Confederation Congress, November 5, 1781-February 1, 1783
- Supreme Executive Council appointed McKean, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, 1777-1799
- Elected to Pennsylvania High Court of Errors and Appeals, 1780-1806
- Delegate, Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, 1789-1790
- Governor of Pennsylvania, December 17, 1799, reelected 1802, 1805; served until December 20, 1808
- Pennsylvania House of Representatives impeached McKean, 1807

Honors and Awards

- Signer, Declaration of Independence
- Wrote the first Delaware Constitution adopted September 20, 1776
- Honorary LL.D. degree: Princeton College, 1781; Dartmouth College, 1782; University of Pennsylvania, 1785



- Honorary A.M. degree: University of Pennsylvania, 1763
- Thomas McKean High School, New Castle County
- McKean Street, Philadelphia
- McKean Hall dormitories at University of Delaware, Penn State University

Memberships and Associations

- Trustee, New Castle Common, 1763?
- Trustee, Academy at Newark, Delaware, 1769
- American Philosophical Society, March 1768
- Trustee, Loan Office of Newcastle County, Delaware, 17 renewed in 1768 and 1772
- Trustee, Market Square and Court House Square
- One of the Founders and Trustees, Wilmington Academy, April 10, 1773
- Pennsylvania Society of Cincinnati, 1785
- Founder, Hibernian Society, 1790

Publications

- With Caesar Rodney, Laws of New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties Upon Delaware (1763)
- With George Read, The Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania...Passed between the 30th Day of September 1775 and the Revolution (1782)
- With George Read, Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives of the Governments of the Counties of New-Castle, Kent and Sussex upon Delaware, for the Years 1765, 1766, 1767, 1768, 1769, 1770 (1931)
- A Charge Delivered to the Grand Jury by the Honourable Thomas McKean at a Court of Oyer and Terminer, and General Gaol Delivery...on the 21st Day of April, 1778 (1778)
- With James Wilson, Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States (1793)
- A Calm Appeal to the People of Delaware (1793)
- Opinion of Chief Justice M'Kean. "The Chief Justice of Pennsylvania Is Requested to Answer the Following Queries, at the Particular Desire of the Judges of the Election for the Township of the Northern Liberties, the District of Southwark and the Townships of Moyamensing and Passyunk." (1798)
- Pennsylvania. Militia Legion of Philadelphia. Legionary Orders. December 28th, 1799 [1799]. Yesterday the Commandant Was Honored by a Communication from the Governor, Which Indicating at Once Both Sensibility and High Consideration for the Corps, Ought, He Conceives, to Be Given in the Terms in Which it Is Expressed.... (1799)
- The Inagural [Sic] Address of Thomas M'Kean, Governor of Pennsylvania, to Both Houses of the Legislature; with Their Answers, and His Replies. : to Which Are Added, Remarks (1800)
- Governor's Message. To the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (1800)
- Objections of the Governor to the Bill, No. 107, Entitled, an Act to Alter the Mode of Appointing the Comptroller and Register General (1805)

Sources

John M. Coleman, Thomas McKean: Forgotten Leader of the Revolution (1975); John Hill Martin, Martin's Bench and Bar of Philadelphia 22-24, 237, 290 (1883); Thomas McKean, Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_McKean; G. S. Rowe, McKean, Thomas, American National Biography Online; John M. Coleman, Thomas McKean and the Origins of an Independent Judiciary, 34 Pa. Hist. 111 (1967); Peeling, Governor McKean and the Pennsylvania Jacobins, 1799-1808, 54 Pa. Mag. Hist. & Biog. 320 (1930); G. S. Rowe, Embattled Bench 108, 131-46, 148, 150-57, 159-61, 167, 169-71, 173-75, 177-78, 185-90, 192-97, 203, 204, 209, 214, 217, 220-22, 224-25, 228, 230 (1994); 2 Frank M. Eastman, Courts and Lawyers of Pennsylvania: A History (1623-1923) 285 (1922); John W. Jordan, 3 Colonial and Revolutionary Families 1177 (1911); G. S. Rowe, Thomas McKean and the Coming of the Revolution. 96 Pa. Mag. Hist. & Biog. 3 (1972).