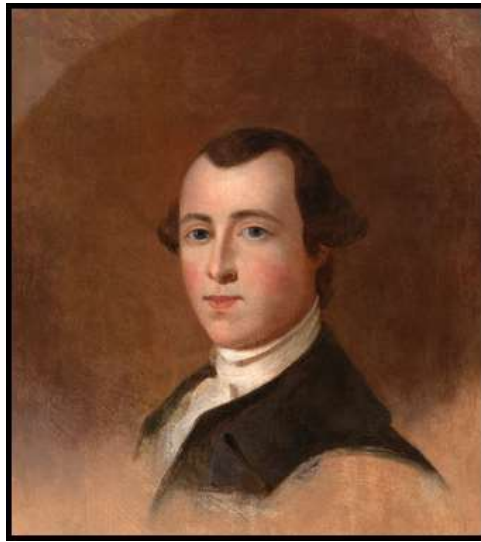


Thomas Heyward, Jr.
Signer of the Declaration of Independence
July 28, 1746 – March 6, 1809



Source: *National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, USA* [Learn More](#).
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A member of St. Michael's Parish, Thomas Heyward, Jr. was already deeply involved in public service while still in his late twenties. An American Founding Father, he served as a lawyer, judge, politician, and an accomplished soldier.

As a delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Heyward voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia on July 4, 1776. His father, Daniel Heyward, remained loyal to the British Crown and strongly disapproved of his son's decision, knowing it would make him a wanted man in British eyes.

During the Siege of Charleston in 1780, the British captured Heyward and imprisoned him in St. Augustine, Florida. As his father had feared, Heyward's property—valued at approximately \$50,000—was confiscated, along with 130 enslaved people.

Heyward was imprisoned alongside fellow parishioner Charles Cotesworth Pinckney. After eleven months in captivity, both men were released in a prisoner exchange. During the voyage to escape to Philadelphia, Heyward fell overboard but survived by clinging to the ship's rudder.

After the war, Heyward returned to Charleston and resumed his service as a judge. In 1789, he retired from public office to focus on agriculture at his plantation. He became a founder and the first president of the Agricultural Society of South Carolina and remained active in the organization until his death in 1809 at the age of sixty-three.

Heyward's legacy lives today through his great-great-grandson, DuBose Heyward, who authored the book, *Porgy* (1925). George Gershwin later transformed *Porgy* into the opera *Porgy and Bess*.

