

Will of George Ross

July 10, 1779

Mss.B.R735w

American Philosophical Society
105 South Fifth Street
Philadelphia, PA, 19106
215-440-3400
manuscripts@amphilsoc.org

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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Title	Will of George Ross
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Background note

George Ross (1730-1779) was a lawyer, a member of the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly, vice-president of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, a member of the First and Second Continental Congresses and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Ross was born in New Castle, Delaware, the son of the Anglican rector of Immanuel Church Rev. George Ross and his wife Catherine Van Gezel. He received a sound private classical education at home. He read the Law in his brother John's law firm and was admitted to the bar in Philadelphia at the age of twenty. Afterward, he moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania to set up a law practice in 1751. Also, in 1751 he married Ann Lawler, with whom he had three children. He served as the king's prosecutor from 1756-1768, and as an assemblyman in the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly from 1768-1775. Although originally a moderate in the controversy engendered by the new colonial trade regulations and taxes after the French and Indian War, the events of the Boston Tea Party and passage of the Coercive Acts pushed Ross into the Whig camp of those seeking American independence from Great Britain. Ross was elected to the Pennsylvania Provincial Conference on July 15, 1774 and then to the First Continental Congress. In addition to his congressional service, he was appointed to the Pennsylvania Committee of Public Safety, as well as the Lancaster County Committee of Observation. As vice-president of the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention of 1776, Ross helped to draft the Pennsylvania Declaration of Rights, but ended up opposing the Pennsylvania constitution of 1776, which he considered too radical. Another major source of conflict for Ross was the Pennsylvania Test Acts, from which he and other Republicans recoiled. As part of the Continental Congress, Ross participated in the debates on July 2-4, 1776 to amend Thomas Jefferson's draft of the Declaration of Independence. Elected to the Second Continental Congress, Ross signed the Declaration of Independence on August 2, 1776. Ross was appointed judge of the Admiralty Court of Pennsylvania in March 1779, and presided over the important case of *Olmsted et al. v. Rittenhouse's Executors*, which raised serious questions regarding the prerogatives of a state government and its courts in conflict with federal authorities. Ross died of gout in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1779.

Scope & content

D.S. 4p. Proved and probated July 16, 1779, S: Th. Bond, Saml Morris, et al.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

American Philosophical Society

Restrictions

Restrictions on Access

Restricted, cf. terms of use, Legal folder.

Provenance

Acquisition Information

Deposited by the Register of Wills Office, Phila; Aug. 1955.

Indexing Terms

Genre(s)

- Legal Records
- Miscellaneous

Subject(s)

- Pennsylvania History

Other Descriptive Information

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Other Descriptive Information

The will of George Ross contains detailed information on this prominent Pennsylvanians estate at the time of his death. It discusses his land holdings in Lancaster and elsewhere and some of his personal belongings.