

"There is nothing so powerful as truth"  
DANIEL WEBSTER



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"FROM COOST TO THE SEA"

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## NH CONSTITUTION'S 250TH ANNIVERSARY



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Members of the New Hampshire Sons of the American Revolution, including Curtis Hermann (foreground), present the colors at the 250th Anniversary of the Nation's First State Constitution event at the New Hampshire State Archives in Concord on Monday. On Jan. 5, 1776, New Hampshire adopted the first state constitution in America.

## Granite State 'helped light a path to American independence'

By Kevin Landrigan  
Union Leader Staff

COMPLETE WITH colonial reenactments and a boisterous ovation from onlookers, Secretary of State David Scanlan hosted a ceremony Monday marking the 250th anniversary of New Hampshire becoming the nation's first state to adopt a Constitution and declare its independence from England.

Michael LePage, a historical interpreter and seasoned reenactor, played Matthew Thornton to read the 2½-page document adopted in Exeter on Jan. 5, 1776.

"We do resolve that this Congress assume the name, power and authority of the House of Representatives or assembly of New Hampshire," LePage read.

Adoption of the document came after Royal Governor John Wentworth had fled the state months earlier, which followed a series of rebellious acts by New Hampshire citizens against England that



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Portraying Matthew Thornton, role player Michael LePage reads New Hampshire's 1776 Constitution on Monday.

culminated in the Pine Tree Riot in Wear in 1772 and an attack on the English fort of William and Mary in New Castle in December 1774.

"Courts could not function, laws could

not be enforced, everyday government life was brought to a halt," State Archivist Ashley Miller said of the void that Wentworth had created.

What's especially historic about this early document was that it put the New Hampshire House of Representatives in charge of the new state, directing that it act in concert with a 12-person assembly of freeholders chosen from residents in the counties within its borders.

"We have a government that is run by the citizens of this state and the country that has endured for two-and-a-half centuries. That is really remarkable," Scanlan said.

A crowd of about 100 attended the ceremony at the State Archives Building that included a display of historical artifacts, including a copy of the state's first Constitution and a waistcoat worn by founding father Josiah Bartlett.

Matthew Thornton would serve as

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# Constitution

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speaker of the New Hampshire House during 1776 and became one of three residents to sign the Declaration of Independence.

Miller noted the first Constitution was always intended to be temporary, replaced by its present document adopted in 1784 after the Revolutionary War, which created the office of governor and recognized a separate judicial branch.

“It helped light a path to American independence and for that, its place in history is secure,” Miller said.

New Hampshire became the ninth and deciding state of the original 13 colonies to vote to ratify the U.S. Constitution in 1788.

“From the Pine Tree Riot to the presidential primaries, our First in the Nation legacy is still going strong — Live Free or Die,” Gov. Kelly Ayotte posted on X Monday.

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Curtis Hermann of the New Hampshire Sons of the American Revolution cheers following a reading of the New Hampshire Constitution during a ceremony Monday.