THE FOUNDING FATHERS

The U.S. Constitution brought together, in one remark- able document, ideas from many people and several existing documents, including the Articles of Confederation and Declaration of Independence. Those who made significant intellectual contributions to the Constitution are called the "Founding Fathers" of our country. Many of the Founding Fathers were at the Constitutional Convention, where the Constitution was hammered out and ratified. George Washington, for exam- ple, presided over the Convention. James Madison, also present, wrote the document that formed the model for the Constitution. Other Founding Fathers were not there, but made significant contributions in other ways. Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, was serving as ambassador to France at the time of the Convention. He kept abreast of the proceedings in Philadelphia by carrying on correspondence with James Madison. John Adams, as ambassador to Great Britain, wrote "Defense of the Constitution of the Government of the United States Of America." Thomas Paine wrote the influential pamphlet "Common Sense," which immeasurably influenced the philosophy reflected in the Declaration of Independence. One of the Founding Fathers, Patrick Henry, was initially opposed to the very idea of the Constitution! He wanted to keep the Articles of Confederation, the predecessor to the Constitution. However, when an agreement was made to add a "bill of rights" to the Constitution, Henry fought hard for its ratification. The term "framers" is sometimes used to specify those who helped "craft" the Constitution. "Founding Fathers" often refers to people who contributed to the development of independence and nationhood. However, the notion of a "framer" or a "Founding Father" is not easily defined. When the following sections of the book talk about "Founding Fathers," they are describing people who had a significant impact on the Constitution either directly or indirectly. The list is by no means complete, but it does identify people who played a large role in the development of the Constitution at this crucial time in American history.