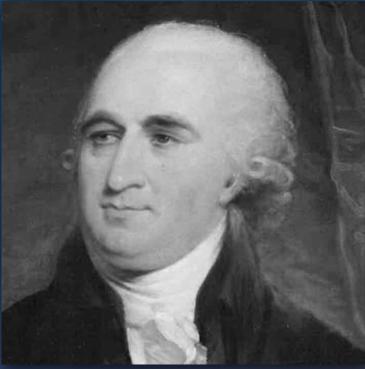




225<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
1789-2014



## James Duane

**Born:**

February 6, 1733  
New York, NY

**Received Commission:**

September 26, 1789

**District of New York  
service:**

1789-1794

**Died:**

February 1, 1797  
Schenectady, NY

James Duane, the son of a prosperous merchant, received a classical and religious education. He did not attend university, but immediately became a clerk in the law office of James Alexander in 1747. He was admitted to the bar in 1754 and developed a prominent law practice. He also became embroiled in disputes over lands he owned in the Mohawk Valley of New York and Vermont when, at the end of the colonial era, New York's jurisdiction over these areas was contested.

Duane became Clerk of the Chancery Court of New York City in 1762, and then Attorney General of the Colony of New York in 1767. During the Revolutionary Period, Duane served on various committees and was a delegate to the Continental Congress. He was opposed to violence and did not think the colonies were united enough for self-government, so opposed the Declaration of Independence because of its timing and wording. During this time he continued to serve the Colony of New York as Indian Commissioner.

After the revolution, James Duane served as a State Senator in New York, and was the first Mayor of New York City after the British evacuation. At the Poughkeepsie convention in 1788, he was a strong advocate for ratification of the Constitution of the United States. He was a founding member of the Society of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in the City of New York.

In 1789, he became the first federal judge of the new United States District Court for the District of New York appointed by President Washington on September 26, 1789. He served until he resigned on March 17, 1794.

Judge Duane retired to Duanesburg, New York.

**Sources:**

AMERICAN NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Biographical Directory of Federal Judges, available at <http://www.fjc.gov/>.