

John Hancock - 1737 / 1793

Our County, Hancock County, was named after an American Patriot **John Hancock**. Mr. Hancock is usually remembered as the President of the Continental Congress and his bold signature on the Declaration of Independence. Hancock remains one of the least known of the founding fathers. His contributions to our independence and to the American people were nothing short of amazing.

John Hancock was born in Braintree, Massachusetts on January 23, 1737. Some historians mark his birth date as January 12, 1737. Whatever the case, John was born to **Mary and John Hancock**. He was the first of 3 children. His father died when John was only 7 years old. His mother was not able to care for 3 children without a husband. So she accepted the offer of her husband's brother Tom Hancock to adopt John. **Tom Hancock** and his wife **Lydia Hancock** had been married for 13 years but were not able to have children. Tom Hancock was a very successful merchant and longed for a son he could one day hand over his business to.

At the time, Tom Hancock was one of the richest and most powerful men in the colonies. He was the founder of the House of Hancock which was located in Boston and known worldwide. He imported and exported products and owned retail stores, docks, and ships.

Tom and Lydia Hancock raised John as their own son. They made sure he had the finest schooling, culminating with graduation from Harvard University. Tom taught his adopted son all about his business including the art of negotiation and deal making.

In 1764 Tom Hancock passed away and John inherited the entire House of Hancock with all its holdings and wealth. At the time John was not married and continued to live with Lydia Hancock in Boston at their mansion known as Beacon Hill.

John, it turns out, was a master business man and greatly expanded an already successful business. He was known to be shrewd in business dealings and very kind to his employees. He also often helped the needy of Boston with firewood and food in the cold winters. He was a generous contributor to Boston Churches and his beloved Harvard University.

In 1765 the British passed the Stamp Act and John Hancock protested it. It was repealed in 1766 and Hancock was hailed as a hero and elected to the legislature.

In 1767 the British passed the Townshend Acts and Hancock led merchants to boycott British goods. The Acts were later repealed in 1770.

By 1774 John Hancock was encouraging American independence and in 1775 he was elected President of the Continental Congress. In this year he also married **Dorothy (Dolly) Quincy Hancock**. They had a daughter **Lydia** in 1776. Lydia became ill and died in 1777.

Of course John Hancock was the first person to sign the Declaration of Independence on 4th of July, 1776. Many don't realize that his was the only signature on the document for nearly 30 days. Others were reluctant to sign at first and others signed as the document got around to them.

During the Revolutionary War John was forced to leave his home in Boston. He spent much of his fortune to finance the "Minute Men" colonial troops, paying for ammunition, arms, food and supplies. After Boston was liberated from British occupation John returned home and helped finance the rebuilding Boston. He and Dorothy had a son, **John George Washington Hancock**, in 1778. John Hancock was elected the first Governor of Massachusetts in 1780 but resigned the post in 1785.

In 1787 his son died after an ice skating accident. It devastated John and his wife. That same year the people of Massachusetts demanded Hancock's return as their Governor. He threw himself into public service once again. In 1788 Hancock delivered an impassioned speech to the Constitutional Convention that assured the ratification of the Constitution. He also proposed 9 Conciliatory Amendments as Bill of Rights.

In 1789 he was re-elected the Governor of Massachusetts and served in that position until his death on October 8, 1793 in Boston at the age of 57.

John Hancock was an American Patriot. His skill at negotiation and ability to get differing factions to come to compromise made him very valuable before, during and after the Revolution. He personally helped finance the Revolutionary War and rebuild Boston later. His generosity to people less fortunate was well known at the time. Therefore, he should also be remembered as a humanitarian.

John Hancock was not perfect. In his time he had critics that were vocal about his lavish lifestyle or what some said at the time as aristocratic. He did like the finer things in life but felt he had earned what he had. History shows that he spent most of his fortune helping others. He was a devoted public servant until the end.

Hancock County, Ohio should be extremely proud to be named after such a great American.

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