

John Hart

John Hart (between 1706 and 1713 – May 11, 1779) was known as "Honest John Hart", he was a founding father of America, a landowner, a farmer, Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly, member of the Second Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence. When the British invaded New Jersey, he was forced into hiding as a wanted man sought by his pursuers.

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Early life

An exact date of birth is unknown as is the location and the year is also disputed. It is believed that he was most likely born either near Stonington, Connecticut, or Hopewell Township, Burlington, New Jersey.^[2] Hart was the son of Captain Edward Hart, militia leader who was assigned to fight during the French and Indian War in Canada. John had little education but he did have good sense and virtue. Later in life he knew the law and was considered informed on money and business matters.

John married Deborah Scudder and they would raise 13 children. He became a wealthy farmer with the purchase of 190 to 380 acres of land complete with grist mills. In 1750, John was elected Freeholder for Hunterdon County, the highest elected office in the county. In 1761, John was elected to the Provincial Assembly of New Jersey. In 1776, he was designated one of the officials to sign the new Bill of Credit notes issued as money for the western New Jersey division of the treasury.

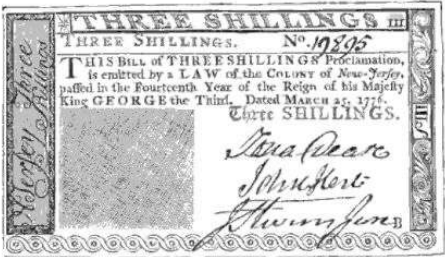
He was a devoted member of the Old Baptist Church, which also had a meeting house that was built on land that he donated to the congregation and would later be buried on the same ground.^[3]

Founding Fathers



John Hart

State	New Jersey
Religion	Christian- Presbyterian ^[1]
Founding Documents	<u>Declaration of Independence</u>



Continental currency bearing Hart's signature

Revolutionary War

Shortly after signing the Declaration of Independence, Hart became Speaker of the Assembly, the highest political rank in colonial New Jersey. John became a marked man by both the British forces and Hessian mercenaries. Tragedy soon followed, his farm, livestock, grist mills and some of his property were destroyed. His wife lay dying when British forces invaded. John and his thirteen children fled for their lives. He lived by hiding in the forest and sleeping in caves, eluding capture. Without the Speaker, the state assembly had adjourned.

After the Battle of Trenton, General George Washington's forces had succeeded in defeating the British at the Battle of Princeton. Hart would return to reconvene the State Assembly at Pittstown, and he returned to what was left of his home. June 22, 1778 he invited the American army to encamp on his farm. George Washington and between 6,000 and 12,000 soldiers camped in his fields having his famous Council of War at the nearby Hunt House, then set off to fight which is known as the Battle of Monmouth on June 28.

Death

The toll on Hart was great and his own health started to fail. He suffered from "gravel",^[4] another name for kidney stones, and resigned from the legislature in 1779. Less than three-years after signing the Declaration, Hart died at his Hopewell farm in New Jersey on May 11. He is buried in the yard of the First Baptist Church at the town of Hopewell, Mercer County.

References

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 2. Founding Fathers: Atheists? Deists? Are You Sure? (<https://books.google.com/books?id=OzM1DwAAQBAJ&pg=PT136>)
 3. The Baptist Encyclopaedia: A Dictionary of the Doctrines, Ordinances, Usages, Confessions of Faith, Sufferings, Labors and Successes, and of the General History of the Baptist Denomination in All Lands; with Numerous Biographical Sketches of Distinguished American and Foreign Baptists, and a Supplement, Volume 1 (<https://books.google.com/books?id=MbkQAQAAMAAJ&pg=PA505>)
 4. Signing Their Lives Away: The Fame and Misfortune of the Men who Signed the Declaration of Independence (<https://books.google.com/books?id=T7NvDwAAQBAJ&pg=PT88>)
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