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Talia Grettenberger

John Hart

The exact date and place of his birth is unknown, but it is believed to be between 1706 and 1713 in either Stonington, Connecticut or the home he lived in for the rest of his life in central New Jersey. Raised on a farm in Hopewell, New Jersey, John Hart was familiar with agricultural life. Like his father, he raised sheep, cattle, pigs, etcetera, and inherited the farm when he was older. He co-owned and operated a grist mill with his brother as well. And also similar to his father, he took interest in, and grew to be influential in civic matters. His father had been a captain of the local militia in the French and Indian War, being a leader of a group named, "The Jersey Blues". However, his father was a supporter of the present king, while John refused to succumb to a life under the tyrant, and swore his allegiance to the colonies. His education as a boy was small, but he was seen as well read and humble. Nicknamed "Honest John", his political association and connections were trusted among many, and a great majority of people held him in high respect and thought him a worthy leader. He was cheerfully supported by a group of baptists who he had donated land to for their church, even though he himself was a presbyterian.

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In 1741, John Hart married Deborah Schudder, with whom he had thirteen children, almost all of which lived to adulthood. He was loyal to the local public in his years of serving in several various branches of Congress, and he was one of the oldest signers of the Declaration of Independence. When he signed it, it was with eager zeal. But it cost him many days without peace of mind, as the British began hunting him.

His wife died in early august of 1776, and the following November, the British invaded New Jersey. Hart was forced to flee his house and hide out in the nearby mountains from the soldiers and Hessians who damaged his property. After some British armies retreated at American victories, Hart returned to his home, uneasy but reassured to be back at home.

In the summer of 1778, Hart invited George Washington and his men to camp on his property, and the general accepted. Around 12,000 soldiers rested there for two days and two nights before their triumph in the battle of Monmouth on the 26th of June. A few months after, he was to attend a political assembly in Congress after a short trip of two days to his home. But sadly, he was unable to make it. Ever strong in his patriotic efforts, Hart met his death from kidney stones, not living to

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see the final victory of the colonies. When he died, two of his children, Deborah and Daniel, were still minors. But little to nothing is known about what happened to them subsequent to these events.

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To the nephew of Mr. John Hart,

John Hart was a man of honesty and goodness with admirable patriotism for these colonies. He swore his allegiance and his being to the pursuit of independence in this country, his whole life was spent in service to the public, and his deeds shall not be forgotten.

It is with great sorrow that I write to inform you that this May 11th 1779, this hero of these American colonies, and representative of New Jersey, has passed.

Years ago, your uncle donated some of his property to us where we built our church, and where his body will be laid.

While the war continues on, we withdraw for a few days to mourn the virtuous delegate. It is our great hope that what his life was lived for, and what future he pursued was, will not be in vain. A man committed to God, and persistent in his hope for this Nation's posterity, defined the undeniable value of his character.

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And perhaps one or two more that I fail to recall.