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Vera Peters

There are 56 signatures on the Declaration of Independence, many of which are well known. There are also a few, although no less great, that are much less familiar. John Hart is one of these lesser-known names that, though small and only eight letters long, should not be overlooked.

It is not known the exact date of John Hart's birth, but we are almost certain that it was somewhere between 1706 and 1713. It is known, that he was baptized on December 31, 1713. It is thought that he was born in Burlington, New Jersey near Hopewell Township, to his parents Edward and Martha, and his five siblings by the names of Edward, Daniel, Martha, Sarah, and Moses Hart. His father ran a very successful farm which he inherited when his father died.

Little is known about his childhood, but since he lived on a farm, we can assume that he grew up like most other God-fearing, down to earth and hardworking farming people of that time. He was probably well educated, because early on in his life he became a person of considerable notice in his community. Sometime in his early life he married a woman named Deborah Scudder and she blessed him with thirteen children to feed, take care of and love.

He did many public services in his life, including donating some of his land for a Baptist church meeting place, and serving as a Chosen Freeholder in New Jersey from 1750 to 1761. He was then elected to the New Jersey Colonial

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Assembly to aid in declaring America's independence from England. Congress was replacing some of the older delegates who were disinclined to cast their final vote for independence. Some of the current delegates were hesitant and congress needed a unanimous vote from all its delegates in the Assembly. For such reasons, John Hart was chosen, and went to Pennsylvania to sign the Declaration of Independence. On 1776 he and fifty-five others signed the Declaration of Independence, and with the eight letters of his name, he helped change history for generations to come.

Later, after he returned home from Pennsylvania, he was elected Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly and the Treasurer of the Counsel of Safety. Then in 1778 while George Washington was conducting his Council of War, Hart invited the United States Army to stay at his farm and he enjoyed lunch with the General.

Tragically, shortly thereafter he passed from this world to the next. Like the beginning of his life, it is not known how he passed, but we do know that the day that marked the end of his life was May 11, 1779.

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Dear Ms. Deborah Hart,

May 15, 1779

*I am writing to express my most sincere regret upon hearing of the death of your husband. If there were any words of condolence that I could offer you, then I would use them as readily as I could. But since I fear words may fail to express my own grief, I can only imagine how impossible it would be to express the way you feel, and yet harder still to make you feel better.*

*So, I have decided instead to state what a wonderful, political and religious man Mr. John truly was, although I am sure you can attest that he was much more.*

*I am sure our community will strongly miss his firm hand in many ways. We all can remember when he was a Chosen Freeholder, and worked so hard to make Hopewell a better and safer place. He so generously donated some of his land for our church, and then went on to be elected to the New Jersey Colonial Assembly, where he not only helped this beautiful state, but many others. He signed his name on our wonderful Declaration of Independence, and put us one step closer to being a free nation. Then even in these last years of his life, how he served our country by letting our army camp at your farm, which is not for the faint of heart.*

*He served with an open heart his whole life and I most sincerely believe that he met our glorious Creator on the day that he left us.*

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*I know that this will have been of little help to your mourning heart, and, with his passing there will always be a hole in our community. If it is any consolation, I believe he is in a better place, and you will by the grace of God see him again.*

*May God bless you and your children.*

*Yours truly,*

*William Allerton*

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## **Bibliography**

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