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Mr. Johnson

American History

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John Hancock

John Hancock was an important leader during the American Revolution, president of the Second Continental Congress (1775-1777), and first governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (1780-1793). He is most known for his signature which is featured on the US Constitution (1787), which he signed is named the largest with knowing the danger of the British Crown once they receive the Constitution.

John Hancock was born January 23, 1737 in a town called Braintree, (Quincy in present day), Massachusetts. His family included his seven siblings, William, Ebenezer, George, Eva, Mary, Lucy Hancock and David Thaxter. His parents were Mary Hawk Thaxter and John Hancock Sr. After his father died, John was sent to go live with his uncle, Thomas Hancock and his wife Lydia Henchman, at “their elegant Boston mansion” (“John Hancock”).

After completing college at Harvard, John Hancock went to go work for his uncle in Boston. When his uncle died however he was childless so John inherited all of Thomas’s fortune and business, and soon became on of the richest people in Massachusetts and New England. He soon had a reputation for being very generous and using his own wealth for public projects, but was criticized by citizens and Samuel Adams for living a “conspicuous lavish lifestyle” (“John Hancock”). He married Dorothy Quincy in 1775 and later having two children John George Washington Hancock and Lydia Henchman, neither survived childhood.

“In 1776, John Hancock entered local politics and was elected a Boston selective” (“John Hancock”). The same year he was elected to the Massachusetts Colonial Legislature. Around the same time, however British Parliament began imposing taxes on the colonies to regain control over them. The colonies requested Parliament to take down the recent taxes, which they refused to do and imposed another tax on the colonies. The colonists thought if they were supposed to pay taxes they should be able to have a say in Parliament.

In 1768, John Hancock was in direct conflict with the British. In retort to Hancock’s outbreak the British took one of his ships, the Liberty. So Hancock smuggled unloaded cargo without paying the tax that was required to pay. They seizing of Hancock’s ship led to protests of local citizens because John Hancock was a very popular figure in Boston at the time. The same year John Hancock was elected President of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, and in December was elected as the Massachusetts delegate at the 2nd Continental Congress.

In response to Hancock’s revolutionary actions, it made a major target for the =British. In 1775, John Hancock and Samuel Adams barely avoided capture in Lexington after Paul Revere made his famous Midnight ride to alert the towns in the path of the British troops. Hancock was elected President of Continental Congress which was held in Philadelphia May, 1775. When the war started John Hancock used his personal wealth to help the colonists during the war.

On July 4, the Declaration of Independence was finalized and as head of Continental Congress, John Hancock was the first to sign it. According to a legend John Hancock signed his name very large because he wanted King George lll to read it without glasses. Today John Hancock is most remembered for his signature on the Declaration of Independence.

Hancock ended his career serving 13 years as the governor of Massachusetts and was almost the first President of the United States. He resigned from the Continental Congress in 1777 for his chance at glory in 1778 where he lead 5,000 soldiers to regain Newport, Rhode Island. The mission was a fail but he still remained a popular figure. He died at age 56 on October 8, 1793. He was buried after an extravagant funeral at Boston’s Granary Burying Ground.

Works Cited

“John Hancock.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 4 Oct. 2024, www.britannica.com/biography/John-Hancock. Accessed 03 Nov. 2024.