Abraham Clark

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Abraham Clark (February 15, 1726 – September 15, 1794) was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention from the state of New Jersey and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was a member of the Continental Congress from 1776–1778, 1780–1783 and 1786–1788.[1]

Founding Fathers

Abraham Clark

State	New Jersey
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Early life

He was born in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, on the 15th of February, 1726. He was an only child, and his early education, although confined to English branches of study, was respectable. For the mathematics and the civil law, he discovered an early predilection. He was bred a farmer, but not being of a robust constitution, he turned his attention to surveying, conveyancing, and imparting legal advice. As he performed the latter service gratuitously, he was called "the poor man's counsellor."[2] He married Sarah Hatfield, and together they raised a family of ten children.[3]

Prior to becoming a member of congress, he served for a time as the High Sheriff of Essex County.[4]

Career

Mr. Clark's habits of life and generosity of character soon rendered him popular, and on the commencement of the Revolutionary War against Britain, he was chosen one of the New Jersey delegation to the Continental Congress. Of this body he was a member for a considerable period, and was conspicuous for his sound patriotism and his unwavering decision. A few days after he took his seat for the first time, as a member of Congress, he was called upon to vote for, or against, the proclamation of independence. But he was at no loss on which side to throw his influence, and readily signed the Declaration, which placed in peril his fortune and individual safety.

Mr. Clark frequently after this time represented New Jersey in the national councils and was often a member of the State Legislature. He was sent as a delegate to the 1786 Annapolis Convention together with William Churchill Houston and James Schureman. He was elected a representative in the second Congress, under the Federal Constitution; an appointment which he held until a short time previous to his death.

In 1786, using the name "A Fellow Citizen", Clark produced a pamphlet titled *The True Policy of New-Jersey, Defined; Or, Our Great Strength led to Exertion, in the Improvement of Agriculture & Manufactures, By Altering the Mode of Taxation, and by the Emission of Money on Loan*.[5]

Two or three of the sons of Mr. Clark were officers in the army, during the revolutionary struggle. Unfortunately they were captured by the enemy. During a part of their captivity, their sufferings were extreme, being confined in the notorious prison-ship, Jersey. Painful as was the condition of his sons, Mr. Clark scrupulously avoided calling the attention of Congress to the subject, excepting in a single instance. One of his sons, a captain of artillery, had been cast into a dungeon, where he received no other food than that which was conveyed to him by his fellow prisoners through a key-hole. On a representation of these facts to Congress, that body immediately directed a course of retaliation on a British officer. This had the desired effect, and Captain Clark's condition was improved.

Later life and legacy

On the adjournment of Congress in June, 1794, Mr. Clark retired from public life. He did not live long, however, to enjoy the limited comforts he possessed. In the autumn of the same year, a stroke of the sun put an end to his existence, after it had been lengthened out to sixty-nine years. The church cemetery at Rahway contains his mortal remains, and a marble slab marks the spot where they are deposited. It bears the following inscription:

Firm and decided as a patriot, Zealous and faithful as a friend to the public, he loved his country and adhered to her cause in the darkest hour of her struggles against oppression.

Abraham Clark High School in Roselle, Newark, New Jersey, as well as Clark Township in Union County is named in his honor.

References

1. ↑ CLARK, Abraham, (1726 - 1794) (http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000418)
2. ↑ Lives of the Presidents of the United States: With Biographical Notices of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence (https://books.google.com/books?id=1tcDAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA344)
3. ↑ The Signers: The 56 Stories Behind the Declaration of Independence (https://books.google.com/books?id=yWOFXE0sVrgC&pg=PA66)
4. ↑ Abraham Clark: Signer of the Declaration of Independence, Volume 1 (https://books.google.com/books?id=7149AAAAYAAJ&pg=PA129)
5. ↑ Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution (https://books.google.com/books?id=64uC9A50r8IC&pg=PA308)

External links

- Abraham Clark: Signer of the Declaration of Independence (https://books.google.com/books?id=7149AAAAYAAJ)

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- This page was last modified on November 16, 2019, at 23:33.
- This page has been accessed 12,519 times.