

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Samuel Adams (1722-1803)**

Samuel Adams was born in Quincy, Massachusetts on September 22, 1722, in the same neighborhood that John Hancock was born and where the Adams family later lived. His forefathers were among the first English settlers in New England.

In 1736, he went to Harvard University and earned a masters degree in 1743. Samuel began the study of law, but changed jobs, becoming a clerk for Thomas Cushing, a Boston merchant. He soon left to open his own business, which failed.

After the passage of the Sugar Act in 1763, Adams began his political career. He joined a committee to protest the new tax. Adams argued that Parliament's action threatened their rights and warned that other colonies might unite with Massachusetts to seek redress. He became a leader in the patriot movement and was a vocal critic of the British. In 1765 he was elected to the general court of Massachusetts, representing Boston. He served on almost every committee and wrote several plans to oppose the British actions. After the Boston massacre, Adams served on a committee that asked Massachusetts Governor Hutchinson to remove the British troops from Boston which was granted. In 1773, Adams was involved with the meetings that led to the Boston Tea Party.

Adams was a member of the first Continental Congress and continued as a member until the year 1781 when he retired. During this period, he participated in the writing of the Massachusetts constitution. After retiring from Congress, Adams served in the Massachusetts senate. In 1789, he was elected lieutenant governor. In 1794, Adams was elected governor and served Massachusetts until 1797, when he retired from public life. On October 2, 1803, Samuel Adams died at the age of 83.

### **John Adams (1735-1826)**

John Adams was born in Quincy, Massachusetts on October 19, 1735. His forefathers were among the early Puritan settlers in Massachusetts. Adams entered Harvard College in 1751 and graduated in 1755. Three years later, he was admitted to the bar. In 1766, Adams moved to Boston. After the Boston massacre, Adams defended the British officers and soldiers winning an acquittal. In 1770, he was elected to the Massachusetts general assembly.

In 1774, he was appointed to the Continental Congress. Two years later, Adams offered a resolution in a committee that the colonies should be independent of Great Britain. Virginia representative Richard Henry Lee offered this resolution to the entire Congress. Along with Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman, and Robert Livingston, Adams was appointed to the committee to write the Declaration of Independence. Asked to write the draft of the Declaration, Adams suggested Jefferson was the better writer and should undertake the task. Adams was a leader of the independence movement in Congress.

In February 1778, he left for France to help persuade France to support the American revolt. He found that a treaty with that nation had already been signed and returned to America the following year. Adams served as a member of the Massachusetts state constitutional convention, writing the plan that became the

foundation of the state's constitution. In August 1779, he became minister charged with negotiating peace with Great Britain, but the British government had no interest in seeking peace. The following year, he went to Holland to sign a treaty of friendship with that nation and to negotiate a loan. Together with other American peace commissioners, Adams negotiated a peace treaty with Great Britain in 1783.

In 1785, Adams was appointed minister to Great Britain. In 1788, Mr. Adams resigned his post as ambassador and returned to the United States where he was elected vice-president. In 1796, Adams was elected president and oversaw a turbulent four years. He lost the election of 1800 to Thomas Jefferson and returned to Massachusetts. On July 4, 1826, the day the United States celebrated its fiftieth birthday, John Adams died.

### **John Hancock (1737-1793)**

John Hancock was born in Quincy, Massachusetts in 1737. His father and grandfather were clergymen. Hancock's father died when John was young and his uncle, Thomas Hancock, a wealthy Boston merchant, adopted him. John graduated from Harvard College in 1754 and entered his uncle's employ. In 1760, he went to England and stayed there until he returned to America upon his uncle's death in 1764. Hancock inherited his uncle's large mercantile business. Hancock also gained influence in Boston and became associated with Samuel Adams and others protesting the actions of the British government. Hancock became politically active. After the Boston massacre, he and Samuel Adams led the effort to seek redress.

Hancock was chairman of the committee that went to the governor asking for removal of British troops from Boston.

In October, 1774, Hancock was unanimously elected the president of the Massachusetts legislature. In 1775, Hancock was elected president of the Continental Congress. His prominent signature on the Declaration of Independence has made his name a catchphrase. Ill health and a failing business caused Hancock to resign from Congress. Still, Hancock served in the Massachusetts state constitutional convention. In 1780, Hancock was elected governor of Massachusetts, an office he retained until his death in 1793 at the age of fifty-five.