

Honorable Matthew Thornton

Signer of the Declaration of Independence



His signature was the last to appear on the Declaration of Independence. Due to poor traveling conditions, he arrived too late to sign it. He vehemently insisted they open the lists so that he would be allowed to add his signature. He wanted the “same privilege as the others,” which was “to be hanged for his patriotism.” Born in Ireland in 1714, his family immigrated to America when he was three. They first settled at Wiscasset, Maine and then at Worcester, Massachusetts. He received his medical training in Massachusetts. Dr. Thornton decided to open his practice in Londonderry, NH where many others from his native land of Northern Ireland had settled. His great skill of healing the sick, along with a great personality, soon made him very popular. He became very active in community affairs. Among his accomplishments:

- Surgeon of the New Hampshire troops – 1745· Member of the Assembly – 1758-1761
- Chosen President of the First Provincial Congress – May 17, 1775 (from a membership of 151 men)
- Appointed Associate Justice of the Superior Court of Common Pleas – January, 1776· Elected delegate to the Continental Congress – December, 1776
- State Senator – 1784-1786 In 1789, he purchased a large estate (including the rights to the ferry landing) in Merrimack where he spent the rest of his life. He died on June 24, 1803 at the age of 89 years. He is buried in the Thornton Cemetery where a simple marker states: “An Honest Man.”



In 1892, nearly a hundred years after his death the State of New Hampshire erected a granite monument to honor him on land donated by the Town of Merrimack located at the corner of Daniel Webster Highway and Greeley Street.

Across the street stands his homestead, the former Hannah Jack Tavern, named for Matthew Thornton's wife Hannah Jack, now known as the Common Man Restaurant.



For more information on Matthew Thornton and his descendants log on to:

<http://www.nh.searchroots.com/HillsboroughCo/Merrimack/familytrees3.html#Thornton>
http://www.earlham.edu/~liffeyt/web-cards-10-00/PS04/PS04_173.HTML