



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on October 12, 2023

Jonathan Trumbull, Forgotten Founding Father: Born Today in 1710

In the tumultuous era of the American War for Independence, one man's unwavering dedication to the cause of liberty and self-government set him apart as a true hero of the cause. That man was Jonathan Trumbull, Connecticut's steadfast governor and trusted advisor to General George Washington. This very brief biography serves as an encomium of the life of Jonathan Trumbull, a figure whose contributions to the founding of the United States were both profound and enduring.



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Early Life and Education

Jonathan Trumbull was born on October 12, 1710, in Lebanon, Connecticut, a British colony at the time. He hailed from a family with deep colonial roots, and he was the son of a successful merchant. Growing up in this environment, young Jonathan received an excellent education, which included a stint at Harvard College. His education equipped him with the intellectual tools he would later employ in his political career, but it was his strong moral character and sense of duty that truly defined him.

Family Life

On December 9, 1735, Trumbull married Faith Robinson, the daughter of the Reverend John and Hannah (Wiswall) Robinson from Duxbury, Massachusetts. They wed when Faith was just 17 years old. Together, they raised six children, among whom were the famous painter John Trumbull; Joseph, who played a crucial role as the commissary general of the Continental Army; David, who helped his father secure supplies; and Jonathan, who would later go on to follow in his father's footsteps as governor of Connecticut.

Entering Politics

After completing his education, Jonathan Trumbull embarked on a career in politics. In 1731, he became a member of the Connecticut General Assembly, the legislative body of the colony. His early political experience laid the groundwork for a career that would see him rise to the highest echelons of colonial government.

In 1769, Trumbull was elected as Connecticut's governor, a position he would hold throughout the American Revolution. Trumbull was the first Connecticut governor to be born in the 18th century. During his tenure, he demonstrated remarkable leadership, guiding Connecticut through the trials and tribulations of war.

The Outbreak of Revolution

As tensions between the American colonies and Britain escalated, Jonathan Trumbull found himself at the center of the growing resistance movement. As the late 1760s rolled in, Trumbull was gaining a reputation as an unflappable friend of liberty and an indefatigable foe of British tyranny. He gained



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political allies across eastern Connecticut by championing the cause of the Sons of Liberty, those gutsy colonists determined to stand up to British oppression and defend American self-government by any means necessary.

But Trumbull didn't stop there; he was all in, even becoming a shareholder in the Susquehannah Company. This ambitious venture, hatched in the neighboring town of Windham, had its sights set on settling the rich lands along the Susquehanna River, in what we now call Pennsylvania. Trumbull was on the move, and his vision was firmly fixed on the future.

In 1774, he was appointed to serve as a delegate to the First Continental Congress, where he joined other colonial leaders in advocating for the rights and liberties of the American people. This marked the beginning of his pivotal role in the unfolding revolution.

A Trusted Advisor to General Washington

One of Trumbull's most significant contributions to the American Revolution was his close relationship with General George Washington. He became a trusted advisor and confidant to the commander-in-chief. Washington often sought Trumbull's counsel on matters of strategy, logistics, and diplomacy, and the two men developed a deep mutual respect.

It was his close relationship with the "Indispensable Man" that earned Trumbull the nickname "Brother Jonathan." The Museum of Connecticut History [records the following provenance](#) of that very cool nickname:

According to legend, Trumbull became known as "Brother Jonathan" because at meetings George Washington was reported to have said, "Let us hear what Brother Jonathan has to say about this." The nickname came to represent the steady and reliable people of Connecticut, and ultimately, the American public.

Trumbull's role extended beyond mere advice. As governor, he worked tirelessly to ensure that Connecticut's troops were well-supplied and equipped. His efficient management of resources and unshakable commitment to the American cause played a pivotal role in the success of the Continental Army.

The Culmination of the Revolution

The American Revolution reached its climax in 1781 with the siege of Yorktown. During this critical period, Governor Trumbull played a vital role in orchestrating the necessary support from Connecticut. He helped mobilize troops and secure provisions for the siege, which ultimately led to the surrender of British General Charles Cornwallis. It was a moment of triumph that marked a turning point in the war.

In fact, Trumbull's commitment to the cause of American liberty was more than just philosophical or political. He put his money — literally — where his mouth was. In fact, it is estimated that during the War for Independence, nearly 60 percent of the manpower, food, clothing, shoes, and munitions for the Continental Army were provided by Connecticut under the administration of Jonathan Trumbull. This largesse earned Connecticut the unofficial nickname of "The Provisions State."

Legacy

Jonathan Trumbull's contributions to the American Revolution were not only instrumental, but also exemplary. He demonstrated a rare combination of wisdom, steadfastness, and integrity throughout the



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turbulent years of the revolution. His legacy lives on not only in the annals of history but also in the state of Connecticut, where his descendants, including the famous artist John Trumbull, continued to make significant contributions to American culture and government.

Trumbull's legacy is further immortalized in the name of Trumbull, Connecticut, and the Trumbull House in Lebanon, his childhood home, which has been preserved as a historic site.

Jonathan Trumbull passed away on August 17, 1785, having witnessed the birth of a new confederation of the 13 independent republics, the United States of America. His life is a testament to the enduring power of unwavering commitment to principles of liberty and the pursuit of a better future. As a patriot, leader, able governor, and confidant to George Washington, Jonathan Trumbull's indomitable spirit should serve to inspire generations of Americans in their own defense of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.



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