

## JOHN MORTON LIFE

John Morton (1724 to 1777)

Ann Justice (Justis, Justic) (wife, 1732 to 1799)

Signer of Declaration of Independence

life

John Morton

John Morton was born in 1725 in Ridley Township, Pennsylvania and died April 1, 1777 at the age of 51 of tuberculosis. He was the son of John Morton senior and Mary Archer. Mary Archer's family is traced back to Bartle Eschellson, whose name was first found in the records of 1644. He may have immigrated to Pennsylvania earlier making him one of first settlers in this region. The Morton side of the family arrived shortly thereafter. His great, great grandfather Martti Martitsen, or as in Swedish style, know as Martin Martinsen was born in Rautalampi, Finland and arrived in Pennsylvania on the ship the Eagle in the 1650's. Both sides of John Morton's family immigrated from "Sweden and/or Finland". He was the first of the fifty-six signers to die and cut short what was promising to be a much greater role in Pennsylvania and national politics.

John Morton's father died in 1725 the same year in which John Morton was born. His mother remarried an Englishman, John Sketchley. It was his stepfather who played an important role in John Morton's youthful development. John Morton had little formal education, perhaps as little as three months. It was his stepfather who gave him the schooling he needed which included surveying, reading, math, and moral training. This enabled him to lead a very successful and productive life. John Morton thought so highly of Mr. Sketchley that he named one of his sons after him, Sketchley Morton. There are few written records of John Morton's childhood other than that he was highly involved in his church. There is evidence, however, that as an adult John Morton, assisted neighbors by overseeing their books and maps as well as surveying their property. He also acted as an advocate and advisor for them when necessary. It is remarkable that a man with such little formal education would play such an important role Pennsylvania's legal affairs and in our country's development.

In 1756 at the age of 31, John Morton was elected to the Pennsylvania Assembly. This was due to citizen trust in his sound judgment and pleasant temperament. After ten years of service as a representative, John Morton's good friend, Phillip Ford, the sheriff of Chester County, died. John Morton was appointed to take his place, thus voluntarily giving up his Assembly position. He was re-elected to the sheriff's position in 1767 and again in 1768. In 1769, after he had fulfilled all of the obligations placed upon him by Phillip Ford, he gave up the sheriff's position and was re-elected as a representative to the Pennsylvania Assembly from Chester County.