

GOV. JONATHAN TRUMBULL  
1710-1785

'His Excellency'

# The Patriot From Lebanon

250 years ago Jonathan Trumbull was born in Connecticut destined for a role as one of the vital men of the American Revolution.

By MARGARET T. JOHNSTON

**T**WO HUNDRED and fifty years ago a man was born in Lebanon who was destined to strike great blows for freedom and the cause of American independence.

On Wednesday, the country will note the birth of Jonathan Trumbull, Connecticut's American Revolutionary War Governor, one of the first Governors to be elected by the people and the first Governor, by act of the General Assembly, to be accorded the title of "His Excellency."

These are the qualities that made him revered by his fellow man: Loyalty and devotion to his country; integrity; sacrifice of his personal fortune; determination to supply provisions, manpower and munitions to prevent the army from disbanding; a God-fearing belief in liberty and faith in victory.

It was these qualities that inspired Gen. George Washington to place Trumbull "among the first patriots" and to confer upon him the name "Brother Jonathan." When the Revolutionary War broke out, Trumbull was the only

governor to side with the colonies.

**BROTHER** Jonathan was descended from Ruel Turnbull, a peasant who saved the life of King Bruce of Scotland when the latter was attacked by a bull. Rewarded by the king, his coat of arms bore the mark of the bull. When the name Turnbull was

changed to Trumbull the coat of arms remained the same.

John Trumbull came to America about 1637; his son Joseph moved from Massachusetts about 1670 to Suffield. Joseph's son, also named Joseph, came to Lebanon in 1704 and purchased Redwood, formerly a parsonage, where his illustrious progeny was born.

Reared by his father, a prosperous planter and the founder of a thriving mercantile business and one who believed in higher

education, Jonathan entered Harvard in 1727. He was graduated with honors and returned to Lebanon where he studied for the ministry with his pastor, the Rev. Solomon Williams.

**I**N 1735, Jonathan married Faith Robinson of Duxbury, Mass. whose father was a minister. She descended fourth in line from John Robinson, pastor of the church attended by some of the Pilgrims in Leyden, The Netherlands. Her heritage thus placed

Jonathan among the elect. A gracious and charitable woman, she shared adequately her husband's life when the stress of war came.

She entertained for him many of the most distinguished officers of the American Revolutionary War: Generals Washington and Lafayette, Count De Rochambeau, Duc de Lauzun and Connecticut's Gen. Israel Putnam and Col. Jeremiah Wadsworth.

Jonathan and his wife, after his father's death in 1755, lived



**BATTLE.** Col. John Trumbull, son of Connecticut's first elected Governor, painted this scene from the Battle of Bunker Hill. It is now in the Wadsworth Atheneum collection. As did other members of the Trumbull family, John served the colonial army.

Photos on this page courtesy of the WADSWORTH ATHENEUM



in the mansion Capt. Trumbull built between 1735 and 1740. It is now called the Gov. Jonathan Trumbull House, Lebanon. It was there the Governor's six children were born, children that became men and women of consequence.

**JOSEPH (1737-1778)** was the first Commissary General of the Continental Army until depleted health compelled him to resign.

**Jonathan Junior (1740-1809)** was Paymaster General and private secretary to Gen. Washington. After the war, he was speaker of the House of Representatives and a U.S. Senator. In 1798 he was elected Governor of Connecticut, which office he held until 1809.

**Faith (1743-1775)** married Col. (later general) Jedidiah Huntington. He fought in the battle of Bunker Hill. Devotion to her husband impelled Faith to watch the battle from afar, but the horror of war was a severe shock to her and she was taken seriously ill. She died in November.

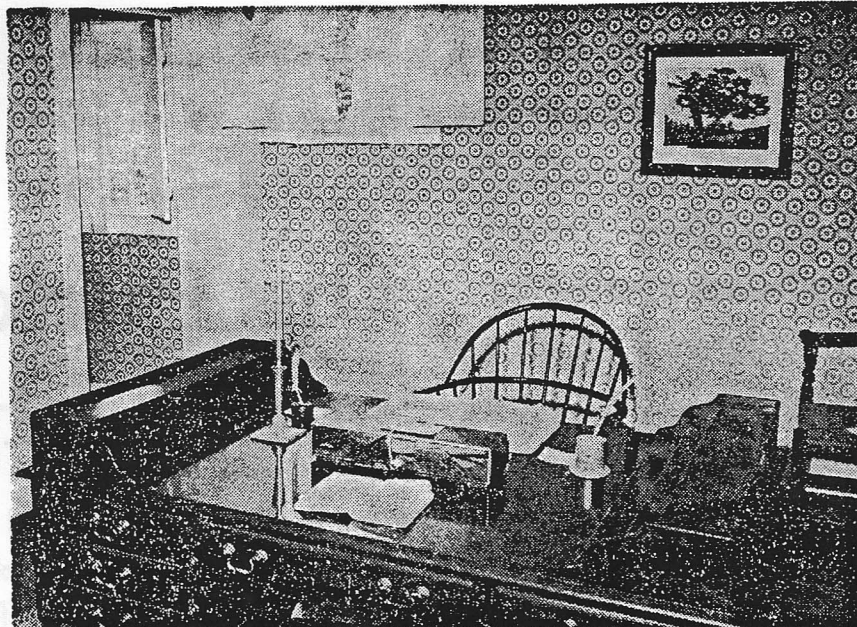
**Mary (1745-1831)** married William Williams, son of the Rev. Solomon Williams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

**David (1750-1822)** became Commissary General when his brother Joseph resigned. He was a member of the Council of Safety.

**JOHN (1756-1796)** was adjutant to the first Connecticut regiment in the Battle of Bunker Hill. A cartographer, he drew perfectly the British works in the Boston area and was appointed an aide to Gen. Washington with the rank of adjutant colonel. Gen. Gates appointed him adjutant general of the Northern Department. Refusing this commission, he left the army and went to England, where he was imprisoned and considered an enemy.

When released from prison, John went to Paris, and on request of Thomas Jefferson he painted eight Revolutionary War battle scenes and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The church in Lebanon, built in 1804, and the Yale Art Gallery are examples of his architectural ability.

A portrait of his father and



**PROTECTED DESK.** It was perhaps from this spot that the fortunes of the Colonial Army were mapped by Gov. Trumbull. Note shuttered window too high to permit a British bullet to wound the Governor. Shutters had the Trumbull trade-mark, an engraved heart.

mother, considered an excellent likeness, is owned by the Connecticut Historical Society. Some of the battle scenes are in the rotunda of the capitol, Washington, in the Yale Art Gallery and the Wadsworth Atheneum.

To return to the life of Jonathan Trumbull, from 1731 to 1769 he spent much of his time in his mercantile business and was appointed to several public offices. He was a member of the General Assembly and a speaker for three years; County Judge of Windham County; Chief Justice of the Colony; and refused appointment as a representative to England prior to the Stamp Act.

**IN 1769** he was elected the sixteenth Governor of Connecticut.

In the first year of his admin-

istration the Yankee Penamite Wars began. Gov. Trumbull was staunch in his loyalty to Connecticut settlers who fought to protect Connecticut land grants from being taken by the Pennsylvania Penamites. In 1775 those wars ceased temporarily.

On April 19, 1775, word reached Lebanon of Paul Revere's famous

ride and the Battle of Lexington. Connecticut immediately despatched aid to embattled Massachusetts.

In May, Trumbull petitioned the General Assembly to allow him to appoint a Council of Safety to advise him for the safety of the Colonists. His store and office became the War Office where in

#### Today's Color Cover

To mark the 250th anniversary of the birth of Gov. Jonathan Trumbull in Lebanon, Courant Photographer Harry Batz took this picture of the Jonathan Trumbull House and the Jeremiah Wadsworth Stable-Museum at Lebanon. The Courant has reproduced the portrait in full natural color. The woman in the foreground is Mrs. Charles Breed Gilbert of Norwich, honorary state regent of the Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution and chairman of the Jonathan Trumbull House Committee. She is wearing a colonial costume loaned by the Faith Trumbull Chapter, DAR.—Editor.

that hipped-roof building more than 1,000 meetings were held.

**GOV. TRUMBULL** was responsible for supplying about 60 per cent of the manpower and munitions for the Colonial Army. He also accomplished a feat that was believed to have been impossible by delivering 300 cattle, on the hoof, to Valley Forge.

It was with victory at Yorktown that Washington placed him "among the first patriots."

With the close of the Revolutionary War, the Penamite Wars began anew.

Gov. Trumbull issued a proclamation on Nov. 15, 1783, protecting Connecticut's rights to "... all lands by virtue of the charter granted by King Charles ... date, April AD 1622."

These lands in later years were sold and the monies used for the foundation of Connecticut education.

In 1884 the Governor petitioned the General Assembly to withdraw his name for re-election. He then retired from a brilliant career to a more quiet life.

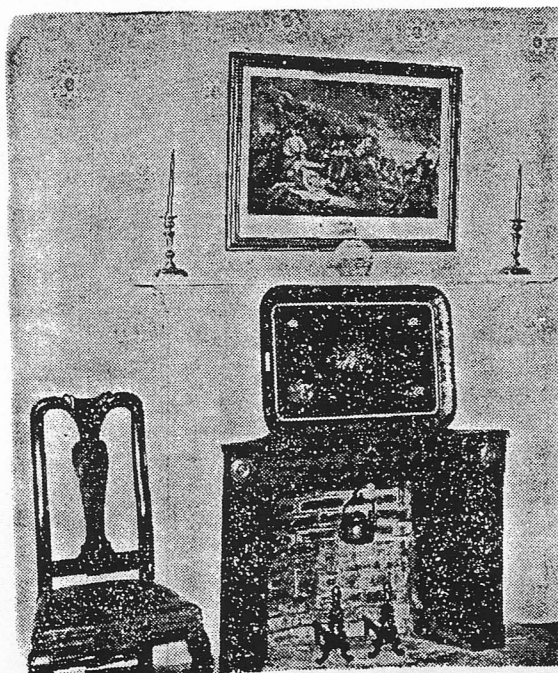
**PROFICIENT** in Hebrew, he returned to the pleasure of his earlier years the study of theology. In 1779 he received from Yale an honorary degree and in 1789 and in 1785 an honorary degree from Edinburgh, Scotland.

Brother Jonathan died Aug. 17, 1785. He rests in the Trumbull family tomb in the "old burial ground" in Lebanon.

Adjacent to the Gov. Jonathan Trumbull Home in Lebanon, where several original Trumbull possessions are preserved, is the Jeremiah Wadsworth Stable Museum, moved in 1954 from Hartford.

The stable, where Gen. Washington quartered his horse when he, Count Rochambeau and Gen. Lafayette met with Gov. Trumbull in the Wadsworth mansion, is an outstanding example of palladium architecture.

The Jonathan Trumbull House and the Jeremiah Wadsworth Stable Museum are preserved by the Connecticut Daughters of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.



Courant photos on this page by HARRY BATZ  
**INSIDE THE HOUSE:** Above, the chair that Brother Jonathan took with him to church each Sunday. Right, pewter plates, some made by an S. Ellis, line the mantle of the fireplace in the kitchen. Left of the fireplace is a baking oven behind a door on which are original H hinges.

