

STORIES of New Jersey

Jonathan Dayton was a member of Congress from 1790 to 1799, serving as Speaker the last four years. In 1799 he was elected Senator and served one term. When war with France was imminent he was commissioned a brigadier general by President Adams. He was a close friend of Aaron Burr, and when Burr was tried for conspiracy in 1807, Dayton, although not involved, suffered from the repercussions.

In 1824 he entertained Lafayette overnight at Boxwood Hall, his home in Elizabeth. Dayton's death there a few days later at 64 was ascribed to exhaustion following the festivities. Up to the end he retained Colonial dress and manners, and was known as the "last of the cocked hats." Boxwood Hall is now a home for aged women at 1073 East Jersey St., Elizabeth. It was the residence during the Revolution of Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress, and was sold later to Dayton.

David Brearley (1745-1790)

David Brearley lies buried in Trenton in St. Michael's Protestant Episcopal Graveyard at North Warren and Perry Streets. He was 42 years old when named a delegate. Brearley, born at Spring Grove near Trenton in 1745, is best known as Chief Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1779 to 1789. He made the first speech for the New Jersey delegation proposing the plan for equal representation. He even suggested that all existing State boundaries be erased, and that the whole country be divided into thirteen equal parts. Pierce of Georgia said of Brearley that "As an Orator he has little to boast of, but as a Man he has every virtue to recommend him."



The Brearley marker in Saint Michael's Protestant Episcopal Graveyard, Trenton.

Before his admission to the bar in 1767 Brearley had been a law student and clerk in the Newark office of Elias and Elisha Boudinot. Brearley absorbed their outspoken spirit of opposition to British rule in the Colonies. He became Surrogate of Hunterdon County in 1771. At the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775 he was arrested on a Tory charge of high treason because of his zealous support of the cause of the Colonists. He was rescued and released by his neighbors. He at once obtained a commission as a captain in the Second New Jersey Regiment of the Continental Line, later being promoted to lieutenant colonel. He was serving with the First New Jersey Regiment against the Indians in the Wyoming Valley in 1779 when he was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. He served as a member of the committee of the Continental Congress that drafted the Articles of Confederation which governed the Colonies from 1781 to 1789. A reward of £100 was offered by the British government for the arrest of any member of that convention.