

# STORIES of New Jersey

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44 Chestnut Street, Newark, New Jersey

## ABRAHAM CLARK



*Abraham Clark*

Both the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution have erected monuments to Abraham Clark, but the greatest monument was the one built by the man himself in his unceasing fight to build American democracy. Nothing was too minute for his attention: he complained that members of Congress did not gather punctually at 10 o'clock. And nothing was too great for his ability, for he contributed to the solution of the major problems that beset the new country which he helped establish.

Clark was born February 1, 1726 on his father's farm in what is now Roselle. His father was an alderman in Elizabethtown and later a magistrate, and the boy might not have risen any higher had he been able to do the heavy work around the farm expected of young men in his position. But because his health was very poor and his nature exceptionally

studious, Clark's parents encouraged him to make a career of mathematics and civil law.

Mathematics led him to surveying, in which he soon became expert, and his other vocation, law, was responsible for a growing reputation and eventual political prominence. A man of integrity and sound judgment, he willingly contributed his legal talents to the needy and earned the title throughout the state of "Poor Man's Counsellor." Later, after he had become a political leader, he was called by another nickname--"Congress Abraham"--to distinguish him from others of the same name.

As a surveyor and real estate broker, Clark was appointed by the Assembly in 1764 to divide the common lands in Bergen Township among the property owners. This first political appointment was followed two years later by his election to the office of High Sheriff of Essex County and appointment to a board of road commissioners to lay out and build a highway between Trenton and Newark.

In December 1774 Clark became a member of the Committee of Safety, and the following May he was elected to represent Elizabethtown in the Provincial Congress which drafted the State's first constitution. Among the duties laid upon him by the governing body was providing gun powder for strategic points within the State.