

John Barclay Biography 1749-1824

John Barclay, son of James and Margaret (Craig) Barclay, was born on January 22, 1749. Margaret was the daughter of Thomas Craig of Warrington, descendant of John Craig who for many years owned and operated Craig's Tavern, a public house here. The village of Warrington was situated four miles below Doylestown on the Philadelphia Road (now Easton Road) at the crossing of Bristol Road and was once known as Craig's Tavern. John spent at least some of his early life in Springfield Township.

In 1775, John Barclay enlisted in the Continental Army. He was commissioned an ensign in Captain John Lacey's company on January 8, 1776. He was later promoted to the rank of lieutenant and retired from the Army as a captain on January 1, 1782. After the Revolutionary War, John Barclay was commissioned as a country Justice of the Peace (December 13, 1782) and rose to become the President Judge of the Courts of Bucks County (appointed June 27, 1789). Later he became a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1790, Mayor of Philadelphia in 1791, and was the first president of the Bank of Northern Liberties of Philadelphia at the time of his death in September 1824.

From 1793 to 1799, John Barclay lived in Warwick Township. During this time, we know or surmise that he frequented the Neshaminy-Warwick Church where he worshipped and served as a Trustee; and probably the historic section of Craig's Tavern (Peninsula Grille). In 1799, Judge Barclay built a fine brownstone mansion on the northeast corner of Bristol and the Philadelphia road (now Easton Road). John Barclay had a son James with his first wife Jane (Crawford). Jane died between March 10 and August 10, 1804. Son James died between March 2, 1805 and April 2, 1807. The mansion was sold to Benjamin Hough after the death of Mrs. Barclay and Judge Barclay returned to Philadelphia.

John Barclay was one of the founders of the Insurance Company of North America when it was organized on December 10, 1792. He served as a director through 1793 and then moved back to Bucks County. Judge Barclay and his second wife Esther had two sons: John Lewis Barclay (b.1810) and James Medray Barclay (b.1813). Judge John Barclay's final resting place is in the Neshaminy-Warwick Cemetery.

The historic John Barclay House currently houses an office of Hatboro Federal Savings. One of the most interesting parts of the Warrington House is the kitchen. It includes a large walk-in fireplace, beamed ceiling, stone sink, copper pots, pewter dishes and mugs, colonial kitchen tools, antique chairs and tables and antique fire tools. The house has eight fireplaces, the original random-width floors and much of the original hardware.

At Barclay School, we honor John Barclay by celebrating his birthday each January with a treat for all the children. Because of his involvement with the American Revolutionary Army, we title the school newspaper The Patriot and celebrate "Proud Patriot" Day once each month during the school year. A portrait of Judge Barclay hangs on the wall in the hallway outside the main office. A plaque was given to the school by one of John Barclay's descendants which cites some of his accomplishments. It used to hang on the brick wall just outside the main entrance to the school. Since the renovations were completed in 2005, it was moved inside to the hallway wall opposite the main office. The John Barclay papers, including his will, and slides of the Barclay House, the Warrington Inn, and the Neshaminy-Warwick Church and Cemetery area are in the school library.