

HON. JOHN MOORE, THE FIRST PRESIDENT JUDGE OF WESTMORELAND
COUNTY – DELEGATES FROM WESTMORELAND COUNTY TO FORM
THE CONSTITUTION OF PENNSYLVANIA IN 1776 – JOHN MOORE
SERVES AS A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY –
A BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND FAMILY.

At the commencement of the colonial rebellion, John Moore was engaged in clearing out and cultivating a farm of four hundred and fifty acres, on the Crabtree run, a branch of the Loyalhanna, two miles southeast of New Alexandria. A comfortable stone dwelling, still in pretty good condition, marked the place of his residence, and indicated a man in advance of the rude civilization of that day.

His wife was a daughter of Isaac Parr, of the State of New Jersey. They had one child. These, together with several colored servants, constituted his household at that time. He was at that period, about thirty-seven years of age.

His first appearance in public life was a delegate from the county of Westmoreland to the convention which met at Philadelphia on the 15th of July, 1776, to form the constitution and frame a government for the State of Pennsylvania. A committee of conference, of eminent citizens of the State, met at Carpenter's Hall, in Philadelphia, on the 18th of June, 1776, to make the necessary arrangements for calling a convention to form the constitution and frame the government upon the separation of the colonies from England. The people were invoked, by the committee of conference, "to choose such persons only to act for them in the ensuing convention as are distinguished for wisdom, integrity, and a firm attachment to the liberties of this province."

In pursuance of the recommendation of the committee, delegates were chosen on the 8th of July, 1776, and the eight delegates to the convention elected to the convention elected for Westmoreland county were John Moore, Edward Cook, James Perry, James Barr, James Smith, John Carmichael, John McClellan, and Christopher Lavingair.

In the convention, John Moore was placed on the committee to draw up a declaration or bill of rights, and also on the committee to report a plan to constitution of government.

The convention selected "a Council of Safety to exercise the whole of the executive powers of government, so far as relates to the military defence and safety of the province," which consisted of the following persons: David Rittenhouse, John Moore, Owen Biddle, James Cannon, Joseph Blewor, Frederick Kuhl, Col. John Bull, Timothy Matlick, Samuel Morris, B. Bartholomew, Thomas Wharton, Henry Kepples, John Weitzel, John Hubly, Henry Wyncoop, George Gray, John Bayard, Francis Gurney, Joseph Donaldson and William Lyon.

On the 30th of September, John Moore returned to Westmoreland county. During the time he was in session with the Council of Safety, he procured for the defence of Westmoreland county, about four hundred pounds sterling, half a ton of rifle powder, one ton of lead and four thousand flints. In 1777, he was commissioned a justice of the peace, and about the same time was appointed Surveyer of the Public Lands in Westmoreland county.

In 1779 he was commissioned one of the judges of the several courts of Westmoreland county, and in 1785, appointed President Judge of the same county. No appointment was made for Westmoreland county until the 24th of October of that year. Col. Rec. Vol. XIV, p. 516. His commission bore date on the following, and is succeeded in the fall of 1791 by the Hon. Alexander Addison.

After Judge Moore retired from the bench, he was elected for two terms to the State Senate from the Senatorial district of Allegheny and Westmoreland.

He was born in Lancaster county. His father, Wm. Moore, died when he was but a boy; and afterwards his mother Jeannette Moore, and her son, in company with her brothers, Charles Wilson, Esq., and John Wilson, removed to the district of Westmoreland county.

What his opportunities for an education were are not known. He wrote a good hand, and in language and orthography, his composition indicated a man of strong, vigorous, and clear intellect. After his mother had removed to Westmoreland county, she was again married to James Guthrie, of Greensburg, by whom she had several children, one of whom, named James, was afterwards Sheriff of Westmoreland county.

John Moore had four daughters and two sons, all of whom are now deceased. One of his sons was afterwards county surveyor. The other died in Kentucky, while engaged as principal civil engineer in the location of a railroad. His daughters, who were respectively married to Major John Kirkpatrick, a merchant of Greensburg; John M. Snowden, editor of the *Farmer's Register*, in Greensburg, afterwards editor of the *Pittsburgh Mercury*, and later in life, Mayor of the City of Pittsburgh, one of the associate judges of

Allegheny county, and at one time, the nominee of the democratic party for Congress, in the Allegheny district. Another was married to the Rev. Francis Laird, D. D., and the last to James McJunkin, a respectable farmer.

All these ladies lived until they were over eighty years old, in the enjoyment of perfect health and sound constitutions, and were, throughout a long life, worthy examples of the highest standard of female propriety.

John Moore, in personal appearance, was a man full six feet high, very straight and erect; had large brown eyes, brown hair, and nose rather aquiline. A gentleman who met him in his house for the first time in 1798, has left the following description of his appearance, and the impression he made on his mind at first sight and afterwards: "A tall gentleman, of erect and manly form, whose intelligent countenance and strikingly expressive eye, indicated a man of more than ordinary ability. He was then about sixty years old, and the rough buffeting of a frontier life, had left a slight shade of sternness over a countenance at all times dignified. He was extremely correct in his habits, unbending in his course, stern in his commands, but remarkable for his affection of his children; and although generally mild, was notwithstanding possessed of a great deal of temper, being deeply sensitive, and having a high sense of honor."

John Moore died in 1811, in the seventy-third year of his age, honored and respected by all good men who knew him, and his body was buried at Congruity Church. His widow survived him for many years.

For many years he was an elder in the Presbyterian Church, at Congruity, and was acting in such capacity when chosen a delegate to the Convention which framed the first Constitution.

By his will, he set free the older of his colored servants, and allowed the younger ones to serve an apprenticeship with any of his children they might choose.