

— HISTORY —

Trumbull's talented children



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Part Three

Gov. Jonathan Trumbull (1710-85) and his wife Faith Robinson Trumbull had six children. They were a talented, sensitive group of children, and they all made an impact upon early American history. The sons, Joseph (1737-78), Jonathan Jr. (1740-1809), David (1752-1822) and John (1755-1843) played significant roles in the American Revolution. The daughters, Faith (1743-75) and Mary (1745-1831) married into significant local families. Faith married a soldier who became a general in Washington's Continental Army, and Mary married a signer of the Declaration of Independence.

The Trumbulls' fourth child, Mary, married William Williams of Lebanon, a signer of the Declaration of Independence. He was born in Lebanon in 1731, and educated at Harvard. Williams was town clerk for 44 years and served in both the upper and lower houses of the General Assembly for more than 30 years. He was an early and ardent supporter of independence and served as clerk to the Council of Safety throughout the Revolutionary War. Williams spent his private resources to send more than one thousand blankets, plus bullets made from "the lead taken from the weights of his clocks," to the troops. He even sent his own stores of beef and pork to Valley Forge.

David Trumbull was born in Lebanon on Feb. 5, 1751, and spent much of his life as a farmer and merchant in Lebanon. During the Revolutionary War, he worked with his father at the War Office, helping to raise and equip troops for Connecticut's land and naval

forces, and for the northern army. David Trumbull had served as an assistant commissary under his brother Joseph, Washington's commissary general. He had a good war financially, and in 1778 he hired master builder Isaac Fitch to design and build his fine mansion in Lebanon, now known as Redwood. It was considered to be one of the most sophisticated examples of architecture in eastern Connecticut at that time. David's brother, Jonathan Jr., also hired Fitch to renovate his house, located on the east side of the Lebanon Green.

David Trumbull also helped supply Rochambeau's French army when it landed at Newport, R.I., in 1780, and the French cavalry legion that camped in Lebanon 1780-81. David Trumbull turned over his house, Redwood, to the duc de Lauzun, the legion commander, to use as his headquarters. David Trumbull had six children, and one of them, Joseph Trumbull, became governor of Connecticut in the mid-19th century. Three consecutive generations of the Trumbull fam-



David Trumbull's magnificent 1778 house, Redwood, in Lebanon, pictured in 1976.

ily thus provided a member who became colonial and state governor: Jonathan Trumbull Sr. from 1769-84, Jonathan Trumbull Jr. from 1797-1809, and the latter's nephew, Joseph Trumbull, from 1849-50.

David, his brother Jonathan and sister Faith all married into significant Norwich families. In fact, Jonathan and David married half-sisters, Eunice and Sarah Backus, daughters of Ebenezer Backus. Members of the Backus family had settled Windham in 1692, and Eunice's mother, Ebenezer's first wife, was a relative of Windham's Eliphalet Dyer. David Trumbull

remained in Lebanon after the war, and became active in local affairs and twice represented Lebanon in the General Assembly.

Three of Jonathan Trumbull Sr.'s sons became significant merchants and politicians, and his two daughters married into two of eastern Connecticut's leading families. The fourth son, however, did not need politics or business to obtain fame and wealth. Lebanon's John Trumbull is one of America's finest painters. You'll be surprised to see which famous paintings he produced.

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