Joseph Hewes, The Quaker Signer

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JOSEPH HEWES, THE QUAKER SIGNER

If you should ask the average intelligent American if there were any Quakers among the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, he would probably pause a moment and then, recalling John Trumbull's familiar painting of the Signing, with Stephen Hopkins standing in the background wearing his beaver hat, he would answer yes. And yet at the time of the signing Stephen Hopkins was not a member of the Society of Friends, having been disowned by Smithfield Monthly Meeting, (Rhode Island), in 1773, for refusing to sell a negro slave. Whether he wore his hat in assemblies of this kind would be a question, and whether in the strain and stress of revolutionary activities he remained firm in his attachment to the principles of Quakerism and considered himself a bona fide Friend, I do not know. But in the Continental Congress there was another man who apparently took little stock in his Quaker membership, yet who was born a Friend—a member of Chesterfield Monthly Meeting in New Jersey, who never relinquished his membership, or was disowned, and whose death was faithfully recorded in the records of his Monthly Meeting. This was Joseph Hewes, one of the three delegates from the State of North Carolina, whose name appears on that now faded, yet ever immortal document, the "Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies."

There were other members of the Congress who through
inheritance were connected with the Quakers. Richard Stockton from New Jersey was the grandson of active Friends, and the Signer is buried in the peaceful burying ground adjoining Stony Brook Meeting, near Princeton, with the affairs of which his ancestors were intimately connected. Stockton’s daughter Julia married Dr. Benjamin Rush, another Signer and grandson of concerned Quakers. In writing to John Adams in his later years, he confessed that he still felt nearest to them in religious fellowship. Charles Thomson, the perpetual Secretary of the Congress, had been principal of the Friends’ School in Philadelphia and, while brought up a Presbyterian, he had married into a Friends’ family, and in his old age, while not connected with any religious organization he has stated that his inclinations were mostly with the Quakers. It is Dr. Rush, who has in his Memoirs left us a complete biography of Joseph Hewes. Any amplification of it is merely multiplying words. It is as follows: “A plain, worthy merchant, well acquainted with business. He seldom spoke in Congress, but was very useful on Committees.”

The approach of the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence naturally turned the attention of the country to the men who had affixed their names to this foundation of our political fabric. A young Philadelphia lawyer, John Sanderson, proceeded to carry out the ambitious project of a series of lives of the Signers, each to be written by the person best qualified for the task. Sanderson’s Lives of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence in nine volumes was the result, the first appeared in 1820 and the task was completed in 1827 by other hands. Three of these men, whose lives were to be included in the series, were still living and growing in public regard as the years unfolded. Two of them had been the chief actors in bringing the Revolution to a
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successful outcome. After a period of sad estrangement Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were exchanging letters and friendly reminiscences of their long public life, and it is one of the remarkable coincidences of our history that their two lives, so different in environment and education, should have progressed along parallel lines. One had written the Declaration, the other had exerted the most potent force in its passage. Of all the fifty-six Signers they alone became Presidents of the United States, both had served as Vice-Presidents and both passed away on the exact fiftieth anniversary of the date of the Declaration, July 4, 1826. Two years later, on July 4, 1828, the venerable Charles Carroll of Carrollton, the only Catholic among the Signers, was to lay the corner stone of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, thus linking the formation of the Republic with one of the greatest instruments of our modern development. Carroll lived four years after this event, respected by the nation, beloved by his friends and family, surrounded by every comfort, in possession of all his faculties, to a beautiful old age. He alone of all the Signers had read to him by the author, H. B. Latrobe, the sketch of his life as it appears in Sanderson's Lives. "He listened with marked attention and without a comment until I had ceased to read," wrote the author, "when after a pause, he said, 'Why Latrobe, you have made a much greater man of me than I thought I was and yet you have said nothing in what you have written that is not true.'"

Unfortunately, the same tribute to the accuracy of this biographical sketch cannot be bestowed on many of the others. As the nine volumes approached completion it was necessary to employ someone to write those for whom there seemed no especially qualified biographer, and the sketch of Joseph Hewes was written by Edward Ingersoll of Philadelphia. Fifty years was too early a date to write
a satisfactory biography of most of these conspicuous men. The great mass of historical documents, letters and journals, which have come to light and which in many cases have been printed and thus made available to students of history, are replete with facts which were not accessible to these early writers. Exact information was meagre and tradition and memory in too many cases supplied distorted and inadequate portraits. No one of the Signers suffered more in this respect than Joseph Hewes of North Carolina. By way of apology Mr. Ingersoll says:

Concerning Joseph Hewes the circumstances known are much less abundant and particular than we desire. Nearly half a century has passed since he died, he left no children, no very near relatives, no survivor from whom the details of his life could be ascertained. His parents were members of the Society of Friends and at the time of their marriage resided in the colony of Connecticut, in one of the settlements the farthest removed from the coast of the Atlantic. In this situation they were obliged to bear the double persecution arising from the often excited hostility of the Indians, who roved through the forests in their vicinity, and the prejudice still remaining among the Puritans of New England, against all that wore the Quaker habiliments or professed the Quaker doctrines. For persons of this persuasion, and indeed for all that were ambitious of a quiet and secure life, a residence in either Connecticut or Massachusetts, was at that period far from desirable. The government of Massachusetts had, in order to "promote enterprise and encourage volunteers," raised the premium on Indian scalps and prisoners to one hundred pounds for each; and in the temper of mind which is sufficiently indicated by such an enactment, a bitter and murderous warfare was waged against the natives of the forest, attended with circumstances often discreditable to the humanity of the white men, and with instances of reprisals and retaliation on the part of the Indians involving the most shocking barbarities. The province of Connecticut had refused to unite in any measures of war that were not defensive;
but the Indians were not always careful to observe the boundary line between the two colonies, or to discriminate between people so closely resembling each other in manners and appearance. The inoffensive and industrious farmers of Connecticut were therefore exposed to suffer the vengeance intended to be dealt upon the scalping parties of Massachusetts, and many of them moved off from the lands they had prepared for cultivation, to seek a more secure asylum in a southern colony. Among these emigrants were Aaron and Providence Hewes, who made their escape from the scenes of savage warfare not without difficulty and imminent personal risk; so near, indeed, were they to the scene of danger, that in crossing the Housatonic river, they were almost overtaken by the Indians, and were within the actual range of their bullets, one of which wounded Providence in the neck.

Transcripts from the records of various Monthly Meetings of the Society of Friends will show how far afield was this fanciful account.

Eight years before the arrival of William Penn, a certain William Hughes of the Parish of St. Pauls, Shadwell, in the county of Middlesex, a cooper, and his wife Deborah, patented five hundred acres in Fenwick’s New Jersey Colony; he later moved across the river into Pennsylvania near Marcus Hook, continuing, however, to own land on both sides of the river. As a Pennsylvanian he was one of the founders of Chichester Meeting, in southeastern Delaware County, Pennsylvania. This William Hughes died in 1698, leaving a son, also William, who seems to have lived in south Jersey and the year after his father’s death married Sarah Bezer under the care of Concord (Pa.) Monthly Meeting. They were the parents of a numerous family, including a son Aaron, next to the youngest, who later was to be the father of Joseph Hewes, the Signer. This Aaron Hughes, who by this time spelled his name H-e-w-e-s had met and married Providence Worth, the daughter of Joseph Worth of Stony Brook,
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N. J. The latter was a prominent miller on Stony Brook near what is now Princeton, and it was over his farm that later a considerable portion of the maneuvering occurred at the Battle of Princeton. Providence was the fifth child and second daughter. To Chesterfield Monthly Meeting which included the meeting at Stony Brook, Aaron Hewes presented himself armed with a certificate in the usual form but somewhat deficient as to spelling:

from oure Monthly Meeting of Chichester and Concord held at Concord Meeting house the third day of ye 2nd Mo. 1727.

To the Monthly Meeting of friends att Crowswick in West New Jersey with the Salutation of oure deir love In the fellowship of the gospel. Thees are to certifie you that the bearer heire of Aron Hews hath lived before us his Inclination to settle within the verg of your Monthly meeting and in order theirto requested of us a certificate to you on that account. Now thees are to certifie you that nesarey inquiry hath bin maid and we find that he hath bin a onist and Indisterous young man and of a sobere and orderly conversation and a frequenter of our meetings free from all women on the account of marriages far as we know.

So desiring his growth and prosperity in the truth we recommend his to your further christian care

Signed in and by order of said meeting by

William Hewes
Ralph Eavenson
& 29 other names.

Aaron and Providence Hewes were married in Third month, 1727, under the care of Chesterfield Monthly Meeting and then or later removed to what is now the little hamlet of Kingston, some two miles east of the present town of Princeton. They were the parents of six children, four sons and two daughters, of whom Joseph the second child and oldest son was born Fourth month 28, 1730. Aaron Hewes, the father, died in 1753 and was
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buried in Stony Brook Friends' burying ground. The Friend of Philadelphia of 1858, a hundred and five years after his death, contained a notice of him, it is short and indicates his close connection with the Society of Friends.

AARON HUGHES (Hewes)

Aaron Hughes of Stony Brook, West Jersey, was an overseer and elder in the church, and "very servicable." He was a hospitable entertainer of Ministering Friends and kind in accompanying them to neighboring meetings. He was "of an exemplary conversation." He deceased Seventh mo. 17th, 1753, being in the 53d year of his age.

The two daughters of the family had married and married well, before their father’s death. Sarah, the oldest child, married Nathaniel Allen of Philadelphia, of a family long associated with the colony, and Mary Hewes, the fourth child, had married Abel Middleton of Nottingham in the County of Burlington, N. J. The three older sons of Aaron and Providence, Joseph, Josiah and Daniel, all left the farm in their youth and removed to Philadelphia. In the New York Mercury of 1756 appeared quite a modern real estate notice and this contemporary account describes the probable birthplace and early home of Joseph Hewes. The place in modern times has been called "Mayberry Hill" located on Snowden Lane.

To be sold, a plantation in Somerset County in East Jersey late the estate of Aaron Hews deceased, containing between 3 and 4 hundred acres. The one half cleared and in good fence, about 30 acres thereof in good meadow and more may be made. A good large stone dwelling house and kitchen; large barn, granery and several other buildings. It is well watered and timbered, the title indisputable. It is situated between Kingston and Princeton, and might be suited to any gentleman that is concerned with the College. It is thought by good judges that there is a copper mine thereon. Any
person inclined to purchase may inquire of William Worth of Princeton, Samuel Worth of Stony Brook or Josiah Hews of Phila., opposite to Black Horse Alley in 2nd St.

These commonplace details and records will show how far the actual facts were removed from the lurid tales of the Indian pursuit of the family on the banks of the Housatonic in Connecticut.

So far there is no record available of Joseph Hewes' life on the farm, his schooling or training as a merchant in Philadelphia. Some of the early accounts made him a student at Princeton College, but his name does not appear in any list of students. He may have been associated with Joseph Ogden, a merchant and tavern keeper of the Cross Keys at the corner of Third and Chestnut Streets, who had married a Hewes and was a relative by marriage, and with whom Joseph Hewes's brother Josiah later entered into partnership.

Joseph Hewes came to Philadelphia, probably about 1750, a young man of twenty. This was about the time that the interest of Philadelphia Friends was greatly aroused over a revival of Quakerism in the little island of Tortola, one of the Virgin Islands in the West Indies, and a considerable intercourse resulted. In 1752 Joseph Hewes apparently made up his mind to enter business there and applied for and received a certificate to the meeting of Friends in that Island, but it seems unlikely he ever went there and certainly he did not settle there. There is no record in the Tortola records that the certificate was ever presented.

Joseph Ogden was a considerable merchant importing dry goods in quantity from England and shipping ginseng, beeswax and other colonial products in exchange. It would be probable that his young kinsman sailed as supercargo on the sloops and schooners connected with this
trade. By 1753 Joseph Hewes had decided to settle at Edenton, North Carolina, and in October of that year he set out on the "good schooner" Friendship, Benjamin Flower, Master, with his little store of merchandise to be transferred to North Carolina at the rate of three pounds Pennsylvania currency per ton. The bill of lading for this initial shipment has recently come to light. As it gives the stock in trade of a general merchant in those Colonial days, we may take a moment to go over it. The most important and expensive item was a piece of cotton goods listed as Ozenbriggs, but really Osnaburg, a coarse cloth first made at Osnaburg in Germany of flax and tow and always a considerable item in the merchandise of the Colonial period, particularly in the southern states, as it was largely used as clothing for the slaves. Of this there were 100 ells at 16 pence per ell. Then followed "Lining check," Broadcloth "flanning," worsted damask and Duroy. There were twelve women's black silk bath bonnetts, a dozen men's silk caps, fifteen pounds of powder, knives and forks, snuff boxes, shoe buckles, buttons, butter pots, milk pans, bottles and porrengers, five cheeses and two short cloth cloaks. The total bill amounted to £64-2-8 which Hewes paid for with snakeroot, beeswax, myrtle wax and rice, valued at £31 and the balance in cash. That he paid for his merchandise with these native products of the south may indicate that he had earlier gone to North Carolina and had come north to replenish his stock and visit his relatives in and near Philadelphia.

Edenton where Joseph Hewes carried on as a merchant during the remainder of his life is in northeastern North Carolina on a little bay opening out into Albemarle Sound. It loomed far larger in the political and mercantile world in the seventeen hundreds than it does today. George Fox had visited its site in 1671 calling on the
Governor, who lived nearby, where he was "lovingly received." "We tarried at the Governor's that night and next morning he very courteously walked with us about two miles through the woods to a place whither he had sent our boat about to meet us." By 1710 Edenton had become a village of considerable importance usually called Roanoke, but upon the death of Governor Charles Eden in 1722, it was named Edenton in his honor. It was a busy, bustling place with considerable European trade and in one year forty-three vessels arrived from foreign ports, and anchored in its shallow harbor. Edenton is the center of a region of unbounded fertility. The whole country is intersected with deep creeks with ordinarily a bold bluff on one side, and on the other side of the stream impenetrable swamps. A little to the southeast of Edenton lies Roanoke Island where in 1585, Sir Walter Raleigh left his first colony and where was born Virginia Dare, the first child of European parentage born in America.

Of Joseph Hewes's homes or warehouses in Edenton, one dwelling is still pointed out as the place where he boarded at one time, and a diminutive tablet in the brick wall at the northeast corner of Main and King Streets marks the site of his store. In recent years a wind storm from the west blew the water out of Albemarle Sound, and the timbers of the Hewes wharf were exposed. As a merchant he had prospered greatly and by 1768 he had become one of the leading citizens of the town. In that year James Iredell, a young man of seventeen, arrived in Edenton from England, who, in twenty-two years, by his natural abilities and diligence had mastered the law, been appointed to many positions of trust and in 1790 was made, by President Washington, a justice of the first Supreme Court of the United States. In setting out for Edenton with letters in his pocket he was particularly
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guided by one from a relative who told him "You will find the gentlemen of Edenton very agreeable; particularly cultivate the notice of Mr. Hewes."

Until Joseph Hewes emerges on the platform of colonial affairs and until his diaries or personal letters are uncovered, what meagre details we have of his personal comings and goings are contained in the letters of James Iredell, for he successfully and tactfully cultivated the notice of Mr. Hewes and they became life-long friends.

Shortly after reaching Edenton, Joseph Hewes had a love affair which profoundly influenced his future life. A little stream, Queen Ann's Creek, skirts Edenton on the east and beyond it facing the bay is "Hays" a beautiful estate, the house in the midst of a vigorous grove and the ground sloping down to the bay. At that time it was the home of Samuel Johnston, his wife and children, including several unmarried sisters. Of these Isabella was next to the youngest of the family. Joseph Hewes became interested in her, they became engaged to be married, but a short time before the marriage Isabella Johnston died, leaving him so affected that he never married. His relations with the Johnstons were as one of the family and he was always so regarded by them, this intimacy continuing until his death.

In James Iredell's letters there are a few glimpses of Hewes' social life of Edenton. "As I was walking home I called at 'Hornsblows,' which was the leading tavern of the town, "to see who and who were together." "Mr. Hewes and Jackson were playing backgammon." "Mr. Worth and Mr. Littlejohn looking on." "Just saw a bit and came away." A few days later Iredell records in his diary "afterwards went uptown had my hair dressed; went to church with Mrs. Blair, the Miss Johnstons and Mr. Hewes. Nobody to make the responses but Mr. Hewes
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and myself and neither of us had a prayer book. Mr. Hewes asked me to dine with him. After dinner Sir Nat. Dunkefield, Mr. Hewes and myself went over to Mr. Johnston's, drank tea, spent the evening there very agreeably." James Iredell was thus early casting his hopes on Hannah Johnston, the youngest daughter at "Hays," who later was to become his wife. Two years after these trifling incidents of dining and tea drinking Iredell pictures the Hays' household to his mother. He writes "They are all united by the tenderest ties of affection and ever preserve an uninterrupted harmony of agreement, which is maintained by a general share of good sense, cultivated understandings and engaging manners that I have never seen excelled, if equaled. They are truly families of love and are known to be so by all their acquaintances." Then the young writer turns his attention to the other sex. "There is a gentleman in this town who is a very particular favorite of mine, as indeed he is of everybody, for he is one of the best and most agreeable men in the world. His name is Hewes. He is a merchant here and our member for the town, the patron and greatest honor to it. About six years ago he was within a very few days of being married to one of Mr. Johnston's sisters who died rather suddenly and this unhappy circumstance for a long time embittered every satisfaction in life to him. He has continued ever since unmarried, which I believe he will always do. His connection with Mr. Johnston's family is just such as if he had been really a brother-in-law, a circumstance that naturally does honor to them both." At another date Iredell records in his diary: "I took a walk with Mr. Hewes to his wharf and spent a happy afternoon with him at his home. . . . As a man and a gentleman possessed of an excellent understanding and blest with a good
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heart, Mr. Hewes is deserving the honor and respect universally shown him."

An entry of January 19, 1775 shows how far Joseph Hewes had departed from the ways of strict Friends of his day. "Busy at my office till one," Iredell writes, "was asked to dine with Mr. Johnston, did so, came over in the evening and being obliged to go up town to shut my windows I was tempted to go and spend the evening with Mr. Hewes, repented it when I went as they were playing cards all the time. Came home between ten and eleven." Perhaps the liveliest and gayest of all the friends of Hewes who centered around Edenton, was Sir Nathaniel Dunkinfield whose plantation was not far away. Sir Nathaniel Dunkinfield returned to England upon the Revolution, bought a commission in the Army, but resigned rather than fight against his old time friends in North Carolina, and for a number of years he kept up a correspondence with them.

In December, 1773, Joseph Hewes and Samuel Johnston of Edenton and William Hooper of Cape Fear had been appointed by the Assembly of North Carolina a Committee of Correspondence. Virginia had previously suggested the formation of permanent Committees of Correspondence to extend to all the Colonies. This was gradually accomplished and the system was effective in spreading the idea of resistance, welding the colonies to a common cause and leading to an almost spontaneous and simultaneous movement for the formation of a Continental Congress. The colony of New York issued the first call, other colonies followed and the meeting was called to meet in Philadelphia on the 5th of September, 1774.

On the 5th of September, the day set for the meeting of Congress, John Adams writes his Abigail, "The delegates
all met at the City Tavern and walked to the Carpenters Hall, where they took a view of the room and of the chamber where is an excellent library. There is also a long entry where gentlemen may walk, and a convenient chamber opposite to the library. The general cry was this was a good room. . . .” It was not until the work of the Congress had been well under way however that North Carolina was represented, when Joseph Hewes and William Hooper attended and produced their credentials. They had not arrived earlier because the General Meeting of the inhabitants of North Carolina, convened at Newbern, had not selected them until the 25th of August. They probably travelled by sea. They were the same day added to the committee to state the rights of the Colonies.

Joseph Hewes' account of his early doings as a member of Congress and his committee work during the sitting of this first Congress has not as yet been discovered. There was a constant round of social engagements, the leading Friends opening their doors for the entertainment of the visiting delegates. Washington attended Friends' Meeting in the big Meeting House at 2nd and Market Streets on September 25th. On the 16th a great banquet was tendered the delegates in the State House, nearly three hundred guests being present. To show that at this early date Independence, except in a few fiery minds, was far from the thoughts of the assembled guests; among the toasts given and drunk with applause, were to the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales, and also one to the “Perpetual Union of the Colonies.” Silas Deane, in one of his gossipy letters to his wife, written on the 23rd, says:

The North Carolina delegates being now arrived I will fill up the space by telling you there are three of them, Mr. Hooper, Mr. Caswell and Mr. Hewes. The first is a Bostonian, bred and educated at Cambridge College, classmate with Jo-
seph Trumbull, a lawyer by profession, ingenius, polite, spirited and tolerably eloquent. The other two were men of about forty to appearance; of sedate and settled characters well affected to the general cause but have not spoke as yet publicly.

Congress adjourned on the 27th of October 1774, having completed its labors and providing that another Congress should meet on the 10th of May next. A few days later Joseph Hewes wrote his friend Iredell:


I had a very disagreeable time of it till I arrived here, since which, I have had but little health and less spirits.

The Congress broke up, on Thursday last, their proceedings are now in the press, part of which is published, and which I now send directed to myself as postmaster at Edenton. I have the pleasure to inform you that they are generally approved of here by all ranks of people; the Germans who compose a large part of the inhabitants of this province are all on our side; the sweets of liberty little known in their own country are here enjoyed by them in its utmost latitude. Our friends are under apprehension that administration will endeavor to lay hold of as many delegates as possible, and have them carried to England and tried as rebels, this induced the Congress to enter into a resolve in such cases to make a reprisal. I have no fears on that head, but should it be my lot, no man on earth could be better spared. Were I to suffer in the cause of American Liberty should I not be translated immediately to Heaven as Enoch was of old?

I consider myself extremely happy in the good opinion my friends at Edenton have of me. I wish I had merit to entitle me to it. They have my grateful acknowledgment. I am much pleased with Miss Nelly's (Nelly Blair) letter, and am sorry I have trifled away so much time as not to be able to answer it by this post.

Dear Sir,
Your obedient friend and servant,

JOSEPH HEWES.
After the adjournment of Congress, Hewes returned to Edenton to take part in the political and revolutionary activities of the colony. On the 5th of April, 1775, at a general assembly of the inhabitants of North Carolina, William Hooper, Joseph Hewes and Richard Caswell were again appointed delegates to attend the General Congress to be held in Philadelphia on the 10th of May next, or any other time or place, their acts to be obligatory in honor of every inhabitant of the state. The Assembly also thanked them for the faithful and judicial discharge of the important trust reposed in them in the late Continental Congress.

On this occasion the North Carolina delegates were on hand in good time and soon all, particularly Hooper and Hewes, were deep in the duties and activities of the Congress. Hewes was one of a Committee of Five, of which Washington was Chairman, appointed on June 3rd to bring in an estimate of the money needed to be raised; ten days later the same committee was appointed to bring in a draft of Rules and Regulations for the government of the Army. The next day Washington was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army. Their report was ready by the 30th and Hewes was one of a Committee of Three to have the Regulations examined and printed as soon as possible. Later Hewes was appointed on a Committee to make inquiry in all the colonies after virgin lead and leaden ore and the best method of collecting, smelting and refining it, also as to the cheapest and easiest methods of making salt. In October he was added to the Committee on Claims and a few days later to the Committee to fit out vessels of war; then in December he was appointed on an all Colony Committee to devise ways and means of furnishing these colonies with a naval armament. And so it went, Hewes with his practical experience as a
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merchant, shipper and vessel owner was soon engrossed in work. He has been described as the first Secretary of the Navy and his labors in planning, building and equipping the infant navy were so great and continuous that to them was later ascribed much of his ill health and eventually, his early death. John Paul Jones, later to become one of the outstanding figures in our naval history, was a particular friend and protegé of Hewes. In endorsing a letter from the former to the latter, Hewes says: “To me who knows him better than anyone else.” In his troubles, chafing at delays and what he considered injustices, Jones frequently turned to Hewes for advice and assistance.

We have a glimpse of Hewes taking some of his crowded time to do a favor for his friends in Edenton. On July 8th he writes Iredell:

I have sent by Captain Hatch’s sloop ten pairs of shoes for yourself and six pairs for Mrs. Iredell and Mrs. Dawson. I did intend to have sent double the number for the ladies but could not prevail with the workman to get them ready in time; the demand for women’s shoes is so great that the makers cannot complete half their orders; when a tradesman has made a thousand promises and broke them all, he has one answer for every charge: “Sir, I have been under arms in the field.”

Congress adjourned on August 1st to reassemble on September 5th. On September 2nd, Hewes was again elected a delegate for a term of one year, together with his friend Hooper and a new man, John Penn, took the place of Richard Caswell. Sometime between the 21st and 27th of September, Hewes was back in Philadelphia and with increasing influence and usefulness was entering in the business of Congress. But by December 1st he gives to Samuel Johnston this picture of the work of Congress:

We grow tired and indolent, captious, jealous and want a recess, these only discover themselves now and then, in general
we are pretty unanimous and friendly. No plan of separation has been offered. . . . I am weary of politics and wish I could retire to my former private station (to speak in the language of I. Child) a pence and farthing man.

Nevertheless he labored away apologizing for his many complaints as to the burden he was carrying and his continued ill health. Writing to Iredell March 26, he says:

I think myself declining fast, such close attention to business every day in Congress till three, four and sometimes five o'clock, and on committees almost every evening and frequently in the morning before Congress meets is too much for my constitution. I send you enclosed the locket you desired me to get made for Mrs. Iredell; the jeweller was a long time about it. . . . In these times when every mechanic is employed in learning how to kill Englishmen it is impossible to get anything done right. . . . My compliments to Miss Nelly, . . . tell her I am getting my picture drawn in miniature, and as she may never have an opportunity of seeing the original again I shall send it to her when it is finished.

It is presumed that it was from this miniature that the only known portrait of Joseph Hewes has been made. When the picture arrived in Edenton, Hewes's negro servants were invited to come and see it, and Iredell reports they were transported with it. "I met CAM at the door one day and brought him in," he writes. "He was in perfect ecstasy. 'Master every bit,' says he. 'Ah the old gentleman is grown handsome!'"

Despite his ill health Hewes' war-like ardor was not abated, and he was writing his home friends that he had furnished himself with a good musket and bayonet and "when I am no longer useful in Council I shall be willing to take the field, I think I would rather fall than be carried off by a lingering illness. An obstinate ague and fever or rather an intermittent fever persecutes me con-
tinually. I have no way to remove it unless I retire from Congress and public life, this I am determined not to do till North Carolina sends another delegate, provided I am able to crawl to the Congress chamber.” Another minor matter troubled him when his colored servant Peter slipped on the ice as he was going to the pump for a pitcher of water and broke his leg and was helpless for two months or more.

Writing in his later years, John Adams gives the graphic picture of the decision of Hewes to cast the vote of North Carolina for Independency:

For many days the majority depended on Mr. Hewes of North Carolina. While a member one day was speaking and reading documents from all the colonies to prove that public opinion, the general sense of all, was in favor of the measure, when he came to North Carolina and produced letters and public proceedings which demonstrated that the majority in that colony were in favor of it, Mr. Hewes, who had hitherto constantly voted against it, started suddenly upright and lifting both hands to heaven as if he had been in a trance, cried out, “It is done and I will abide by it.” I would give more for the perfect painting of the terror and horror upon the face of the old majority at that critical moment than for the best piece of Raphael. The question, however, was eluded by an immediate motion for adjournment.

On July 2nd the vote on Independency was taken and John Penn arrived from North Carolina in time to cast his vote for it. By the time the parchment document was ready for signing on August 2nd, William Hooper had also returned to Philadelphia and their names, William Hooper, Joseph Hewes and John Penn appear in the order named at the top of the second column from the left. Joseph Hewes rather singularly has omitted the great scroll or paraph from under his name which appears in all the signatures to his letters of the period, and which are
so prominent in Franklin's signature and some others.

Let us pause a moment in the further consideration of Joseph Hewes's revolutionary and military activities, to survey the conflicting currents of patriotic impulse and religious conviction, as they engulfed the religious society of which he was a member. The first Continental Congress of 1774 was not a revolutionary body. If separation was in the minds of some of its delegates, particularly those from Massachusetts, they took great pains to conceal it. When the Massachusetts delegates had been met at Frankford, as they approached Philadelphia in 1774, they were called aside by representatives of the Sons of Liberty and cautioned as to their conduct. They were told "The word Independence must not be uttered neither in Congress or in private conversation. The idea of Independence is as unpopular in Pennsylvania and in all the middle and southern colonies as the stamp act itself." It was necessary to pursue a prudent course to secure and retain the important conservative and the Quaker influence, for as the latter went so would go the Germans in the colony. Philadelphia Yearly Meeting had early sensed the drift of affairs and at the Meeting for Sufferings, after the adjournment of the first Congress, had adopted a minute and appointed a committee to deal with those who had taken part in approving the resolves of the late Congress which, the minute stated, "contained divers resolutions very contrary to our Christian professions." There began the official action relating to the Revolution, which for a number of years was to put Quakerism to perhaps the severest test it had yet encountered, after its experiences in the Quaker invasion of Massachusetts.

That the Society of Friends went through the trying days of the Revolution and still existed, is a testimony to the soundness of its basic fundamentals. The war was
indeed a series of major surgical operations and that the patient survived is a testimonial to its inherited good health, soundness and spiritual strength. We ourselves have lived through one such operation and grave and difficult as it was, it did not compare in severity with the difficulties our ancestors encountered in those “days that tried men’s souls.”

Friends as a united body did not approve the varied and devious proceedings of the British ministry, which irritated and alarmed the colonies and they had participated in the petitions and meetings of protest, but they did not believe in revolution, they desired to be counted out of the whole business, to remain peacefully in their homes; neutrals in the conflict which many saw coming, taking no part in the “commotions,” a name frequently applied to the disorders of the time. But such a course was well nigh impossible in the fever and heat of revolution, “he who is not for us is against us” and the Society was soon supplying grist to the upper and nether millstones of the political mill.

There were many active and aggressive revolutionists. Then there was a great body who, while sympathizing more or less openly with the cause of the colonies, took no active part. Perhaps an equal number were what soon came to be called Tories and a very small number actively espoused the British cause. Two of these, Abraham Carlisle and John Roberts, members of Meeting, were publicly hanged in Philadelphia for aiding the British, and at least one member was disowned for joining the British army. But the main body of the Yearly Meeting, no matter what their sympathies were or views as to government, held steadfast to the principle that Friends cannot fight nor have any part in warlike preparations or profit by them in any way.
A careful observer has stated that about one fifth of the adult male members of the Yearly Meeting in Philadelphia joined the Revolutionary army or had taken places under the new government. The large majority, with many difficulties and with varying sympathies, followed the course of neutrality and non-participation. It was naturally among the younger men that the defection was greatest and there can be no doubt that the Society suffered and may even now be suffering from their going off, for few of them ever returned.

In September of 1776, Joseph Hewes having visited his mother and relatives in New Jersey returned to Edenton bearing a letter from his colleagues Hooper and Penn to the Council of Safety of North Carolina speaking in the highest terms of the labors of their colleagues:

This will be handed you by our worthy colleague Mr. Hewes, who after a long and diligent attendance in Congress and of the different committees of which he has been a member is now upon his return home. From the large share of naval & mercantile business which has been allotted to his attention by Congress, his health has been much injured; we wish his journey may tend to restore it & that he may enjoy in his recess from publick employment much happiness among his Countrymen whom it has been his unwearied endeavor to Serve while he has been in publick trust.

The increasing importance of Edenton as a source of supplies is shown by the fact that Congress about this time established a regular packet service between Philadelphia and Edenton and Hewes probably returned that way. The Convention to frame a constitution for the state of North Carolina was about to meet and in its deliberations Joseph Hewes took a prominent part. His health was still far from good. On March 9, 1777, Hewes says "I have been very much indisposed which has pre-
vented me from leaving home. I am now getting better but the weather continues so very bad here that it would not be prudent for me to set out in my weak infirm state.” And after discussing the capture of some British vessels he asks “are none of the lottery tickets to be sent this way on public account?” “If not pray send me one hundred of them for myself and friends.”

Hewes had intended to return to Congress about April 1st but as the new Assembly under the new State Constitution was to assemble at Newbern on April 2nd he deemed it prudent to wait until they had either selected new delegates or confirmed the old ones. It is well he did for when the ballot was announced, Penn had been chosen in his stead by a decisive vote. Mr. Penn had industriously circulated a story that Hewes had been holding two offices, a delegate to Congress and a member of the Secret Committee in which position he was making a fortune out of the public business and this was why he was remaining so long away from Congress. Hewes’s friends were filled with indignation and William Hooper resigned the next day. Others hastened to show their confidence in him.

Other business troubles had come to Mr. Hewes. Some time late in 1775 the firm of Hewes and Smith had loaded a brigantine, the Joseph, Captain Emperor Morely, and sent her to Cadiz in Spain, where she was detained for several months by British men of war cruising off the harbor. In November she had slipped out loaded with three thousand bushels of salt, some Jesuit bark, a quantity of wine and other articles of value. Before reaching Edenton the Joseph was seized and made a prize by the privateer Eagle, Captain Brazilla Smith of Boston. Hewes and Smith immediately petitioned Congress for redress. It seemed that privateering was practically pirateering. President Hancock wrote to the Massachusetts Assembly
urging that full restitution be made and the offenders punished. In this letter we get another contemporary opinion as to the character of Joseph Hewes. Hewes had journeyed to Philadelphia, secured the resolutions of Congress regarding the seizure and started on horseback for Boston. Hancock writes of him:

Mr. Hewes, who is the bearer hereof and one of the owners of the brig was a member of Congress for a considerable length of time in the Representation from North Carolina. From the enclosed Memorial you will perceive the sense his constituents entertain of his merit—to which I shall only add that his conduct as an inflexible patriot and his liberality as a Gentleman justly entitled him, not only to their protection, but to the Notice and protection of every good citizen and friend of America.

His ill health still continued and the weary man expressed the thought that if his health did not mend on this journey that he would perhaps wish himself out of the world.

During the twenty years of his mercantile life Hewes had several partners. At the time of the Revolution the firm was Hewes and Smith. The following year Nathaniel Allen, Jr., the son of his sister Sarah, a young man who had followed his uncle to Edenton, was admitted to partnership and the firm of Hewes, Smith & Allen, continued until dissolved by the death of the senior partner. This Nathaniel Allen, "Natt" to his uncle, continued in Edenton. He was the father of William Allen who, born in Edenton, migrated to Ohio. He ran for Congress, was elected by a majority of one, was later elected to the Senate. In Washington he was known as the "Ohio gong" so powerful was his voice. He is said to have originated in 1844 the political catch word "Fifty-four forty or fight"
referring to the Oregon boundary question. A nephew of his, the son of the only daughter of Nathaniel Allen, Jr. of Edenton was the distinguished statesman, Allen G. Thurman, who in 1888 was nominated for the vice-presidency of the United States on the ticket with Grover Cleveland.

February 4, 1779, Hewes was again elected to the Continental Congress for a period of one year. Towards the end of July he set out for Philadelphia, once more to take his seat in Congress, far from well, after the long and fatiguing journey in what he calls the "violent heat." The poor health of the member from North Carolina prevented much active service on his return to Congress in the summer of 1779. Early in November he was confined to his bed and on the 10th of November he passed away. His death was immediately communicated to Congress and a Committee which ever since has been customary in such cases was appointed to superintend the funeral. The Committee, consisting of two fellow delegates from North Carolina, Cornelius Harnett and William Sharpe, and Cyrus Griffin of Virginia were appointed to superintend the funeral. No thought of the little ancestral burying ground at Stony Brook entered their minds. The funeral was arranged for three o'clock the next day and Congress attended in a body with black crêpe around the left arm, which by resolution of Congress they were to wear for a month. The Committee was directed to invite the Pennsylvania Assembly, the president and the supreme executive Council, the French Minister Plenipotentiary and all other persons of distinction then in town. The services were held in Christ Church with the Rev. William White the attending Chaplin of Congress officiating. The interment was made in Christ Church burial ground. His grave was never marked and
he is included in the general tablet to the Seven Signers which has been erected at the Second Street gate.

His fellow member notifying the Governor of North Carolina of Hewes's ill health said that "his complaint was bilious and consumption." His circle of friends in Edenton were profoundly moved by the news of his death, which did not reach them until a month later. "Poor Mr. Hewes," Iredell writes his wife, "I have heard an account of his death. What wretched mortals we are and what a world is this? The loss of such a man will long be severely felt and his friends must ever remember him with the keenest and most distressing sensibility. Mr. Hooper and I have most painfully sympathized in it and it has given us a shock, we have not yet recovered. I will be obliged if you will deliver his will which is in my tin box to your brother, or Mr. Smith, or Mr. Allen." And his old friend Hooper records his feelings: "He was my very intimate friend. I knew and had probed the secret recesses of his soul and found it devoid of guilt and replete with benignity. I loved him and I believe I was very dear to him but a long series of sickness had prepared his mind for the fatal stroke."

A few facts should be added to show the continuing and close connection of the Hewes family with the Society of Friends. Providence Hewes, Joseph's mother, was recommended by women Friends of Chesterfield Monthly Meeting, "to sit with Ministers & Elders," in 1767 and in 1780 she was recommended, in this capacity, to Haddonfield, N. J. Monthly Meeting. Daniel Hewes, Joseph's younger brother, died as a young man in Philadelphia and was buried in the Friends' Burying Ground. Another brother, Aaron, removed to Woodbury, N. J. continuing his membership with the Society. Josiah Hewes, who survived his brother Joseph forty-two years, on his death in 1821 left
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a large fortune. He was a bachelor and had boarded for sixty two years in one household. He left considerable legacies to six nephews and nieces and to twenty-nine great nephews and nieces and eleven personal friends. But our interest is mainly in the bequests to Quaker institutions. The Pennsylvania Hospital, the Monthly Meeting of Friends in Mulberry (Arch) Street, the Almshouse in Walnut Street, Westtown School, The Female Society and Stony Brook Meeting “As a token of regard for the place of my nativity” were remembered. Of special interest was a “large china bowl which was given me by my brother Joseph Hewes” and an iron chest, silver buckles, gold stock buckle and gold headed cane, which his brother Joseph had also given him.

The only two incidents which have been frequently used to claim that Joseph Hewes was a member of the Church of England, were his reading the responses one Sunday in little St. Paul’s Church in Edenton and the fact that his remains lie in Christ Church graveyard in Philadelphia. Against these are his birth in the Society of Friends, his family connections and the fact that he never relinquished his membership in that body.

In 1932 a monument erected by the United States Government was unveiled to his memory at Edenton.