



**Directions:** Take I-295 or NJ Turnpike to Exit 1 at Pennsville, Route 49. Follow Route 49 East through the city of Salem. Make right on Route 658. Cross over Hancocks Bridge. The Hancock House is located on the right.

**Open**

Wednesdays through Saturdays:  
10 a.m. to noon, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Sundays: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Closed**

Mondays and Tuesdays, most state and federal holidays, and Wednesdays following Monday or Tuesday holidays.

**Admission**

Free

**Group Tours & School Programs**

Available by reservation.

**Facilities for People with Disabilities**

The Hancock House is partially accessible for persons with disabilities. Text telephone users, please call the New Jersey Relay Service at (800) 852-7899.

**For the Comfort and Enjoyment of All**

Smoking, food, beverages and cell phone usage are not permitted in the House. Handling of artifacts, interior photography, video and audio recording are not permitted. Your cooperation will help ensure the survival of the museum collections for the enjoyment and education of future generations.



**For Further Information:**

Hancock House State Historic Site  
P.O. Box 139  
3 Front Street  
Hancocks Bridge, NJ 08038  
Phone: 856-935-4373  
Fax: 856-935-2079

[www.njparksandforests.org](http://www.njparksandforests.org)

# The Hancock House



*“Go - spare no one - put all to death - give no quarters.”*

- General Charles Mawhood to the Queen's Rangers, March 20, 1778

**A New Jersey State Historic Site**

Administered by  
NJ Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Parks and Forestry  
**State Park Service** Est. 1903



## The Story of the Hancock House...

The story of the Hancock House begins in 1675 when John Fenwick, a lawyer and Quaker from England, arrived in West Jersey (now Salem County). With land purchased two years earlier, he established the first permanent English Settlement here, called “Fenwick’s Colony,” and founded the town of Salem. Eager to populate the area with skilled, industrious individuals, he advertised the area’s assets by stating, “... if there be any terrestrial “Canaan” ‘tis surely here, where the Land floweth with Milk and Honey.”



Photo: Jim Pflaumer

## The Hancock Legacy

The Hancock House sits on property that was purchased from John Fenwick in 1675 by William Hancock, an English shoemaker. Upon his death the property passed to his wife and then to his nephew, John Hancock.

John’s inheritance of approximately 500 acres made him a major landholder in Fenwick’s Colony. He contributed to the development of the area by building a bridge across Alloways Creek in 1708.



West elevation featuring herringbone brick pattern

Now known as “Hancocks Bridge,” it permitted passage on an important highway between Salem and Greenwich and gave the settlement its name.

When John Hancock died in 1709, he left his property to his son William. William became a Justice of the Peace for Salem County and served in the Colonial Assembly for 20 years.

In 1734, William and his wife Sarah built the Hancock House. Their initials [WHS] and the construction date [1734] can be seen in the brickwork on the house’s west elevation.

Upon his death in 1762, William left his house to his son William, who succeeded him in the Assembly and became His Majesty’s Judge of the County Court for the County of Salem. It was this William who figured in the massacre of March 1778.

The Hancock House remained in the family until 1931, although the extent to which the house was used as a private residence and the property farmed is uncertain. There is evidence to suggest a section of the house was leased for a tavern during the 18th & 19th centuries. The State of New Jersey acquired the Hancock House for \$4,000 in 1931 and opened it as a museum in 1932.

# Revolutionary Events



Sara Hancock Sinnickson & Edward Trenchard from a watercolor by Trenchard, c. 1790.

Courtesy: Salem County Historical Society

On the night of the massacre, Sarah Hancock Sinnickson was at her home in Salem with a British force in residence. Upon hearing that all had been killed at the Hancock House, Sarah was filled with rage and grief over the apparent death of her father. She fiercely reproached the officers who threatened to hang her if she did not desist. It was not until later that Sarah learned her father was alive, but mortally wounded.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, largely English Quakers who were opposed to violence and armed conflict inhabited Salem County. Yet many supported the cause. This stance inevitably brought the tragedy of war to hearth and home.

The winter of 1777 found George Washington and his Army encamped at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The British occupied Philadelphia. Both armies needed food and supplies. In February of 1778, General Washington ordered General "Mad" Anthony Wayne to forage for food, cattle and horses in South Jersey. A month later, Sir General William Howe dispatched 1500 British troops and loyalists under General Charles Mawhood to do the same.

Mawhood's foraging activities met with considerable resistance from the Salem County militia and local patriots. Repulsed at the Battle of Quinton's Bridge, a key transportation link to the fertile fields of Cumberland and Salem Counties, the British were frustrated and angry with the people of Salem County for their support of the Continental Army.

On March 20, 1778, Mawhood issued the following mandate to his British troops: "Go - spare no one - put all to death - give no quarters." At approximately five o'clock in the morning of March 21, 1778, these orders were carried out.

With local Tories (British Loyalists) and their slaves acting as guides, Major John Graves Simcoe and approximately 300 troops attacked the Hancock House where they knew the local militia was stationed. Everyone inside was bayoneted; not a shot was fired. Among the 10 killed and five wounded, was Judge William Hancock. He died several days later.



Painted by George Theodore Berthon

Government of Ontario Art Collection, Archives of Ontario, Toronto

Colonel John Graves Simcoe, c. 1881

## Architectural Significance



The Hancock House earned a place in history on that fateful day in March 1778. Yet the story of its architecture also is important. With its distinctive patterned end wall brickwork, simple lines and little ornamentation, it reflects the building traditions of the Quaker's English Homeland.

Other elements of this architectural style include Flemish bond brickwork; a pent-roof that wraps around the front and back of the house; simple entrance steps; interior paneling and the use of such local materials as Wistarburg glass.



Keeping Room, Photo: Jim Pflaumer

## Alloways Creek Meetinghouse

Founded in 1679, this Quaker community was the third Meeting in West Jersey. It is located about three quarters of a mile from the Hancock House on land deeded by William Hancock in 1753. Completed in 1756, the Meetinghouse was enlarged in 1784.

## Cornelia Hancock

**Teacher, Nurse, Social Reformer**

Cornelia Hancock, (1840-1927) was the great granddaughter of Judge William Hancock, Jr. Educated in Hancocks Bridge and Philadelphia, she taught school at the Alloways Creek Meetinghouse school "Buttonwood Academy."



Collections of The NJ Historical Society, Newark, New Jersey

In the midst of the American Civil War, she left for Gettysburg where she served as a nurse. After tending to the wounded, Cornelia wrote her sister, "...I feel assured I shall never feel horrified at anything that may happen to me hereafter."

After the War, she directed the Freedmen's school for former slaves, founded the Children's Aid Society of Philadelphia and helped plan Wrightsville, a model workers' community in Philadelphia.



Photo: Alicia M. Bjornson