

Swan (or Swann), John ^[1]

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1760–3 Mar. 1793



A drawing of John Swann (1760-1793).
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^[2]John Swan (or Swann), political leader and and state senator, was the son of John Swan, a prosperous planter living in Pasquotank County ^[3] in 1760 and a councillor to Governor Arthur Dobbs ^[4]. The elder Swan apparently died a year after his son was born. Young John studied at the school in Edenton taught by the Reverend Daniel Earl ^[5], an English missionary sent to North Carolina by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts ^[6]. He then attended the College of William and Mary. A planter in his own right, Swan in time inherited property from two brothers; by 1790 he owned seven hundred acres and enslaved sixty people.

On 14 Dec. 1787 Governor Richard Caswell ^[7] appointed Swan a delegate to the Continental Congress ^[8] to replace John Baptist Ashe ^[9], who resigned. He also was a delegate to the convention that met in Fayetteville in 1789 and approved the adoption of the U.S. Constitution on behalf of North Carolina.

Correspondence between Swan and James Iredell ^[10] reveals an agreement on political ideals and a pleasant social relationship between the two families. Swan congratulated Iredell on his appointment as an associate justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and invited the Iredells to visit him at The Elms, his plantation in Pasquotank County. In another letter Swan mentioned his wife Margaret and his daughter Penny. His will also refers to a daughter Rebecca.

Swan was a member of the state senate for two terms (1791–92 and 1792–93). Because he died just a few weeks after completing his second term, his death must have been unexpected. He was buried on the grounds of The Elms.

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[John Swann]. [1890?]. Emmet Collection of Manuscripts Etc. Relating to American History. New York Public Library Digital Gallery. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?420310> ^[2] (accessed August 7, 2013).

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