



## Richard Stockton

Given by New Jersey to the National Statuary Hall Collection

---

AN ILLUSTRIOUS LAWYER, jurist, legislator, and signer of the Declaration of Independence, Richard Stockton, born on October 1, 1730, initially showed little interest in politics. He once wrote, “The publick is generally unthankful, and I never will become a Servant of it, till I am convinced that by neglecting my own affairs I am doing more acceptable Service to God and Man.” Stockton did, however, take an active role as a trustee of the College of New Jersey (Princeton).

In 1768 Stockton had his first taste of government service when he was appointed to the governing Council of New Jersey; he was later (1774) appointed to the New Jersey Supreme Court. He first took a moderate stance in the troubles between the colonies and England. He did not favor separation; rather, he suggested in 1764 that some colonial members be appointed to the Parliament. However, he changed his position a year later when the controversy over the Stamp Act arose. In 1774 he drafted and sent to Lord Dartmouth “a plan of self-government for America, independent of Parliament, without renouncing allegiance to the Crown.”

In 1776 Stockton was elected to the Continental Congress, where he took a very active role. Shortly after he signed the Declaration of Independence, he was taken prisoner by the British. Although he remained in prison for only a month, his health was broken. He became an invalid and died at Princeton on February 28, 1781.

April 2011



Marble by Henry Kirke Brown (completed by H. K. Bush-Brown)  
Given in 1888; located in Crypt.