

The John Morton Advisory Board, chaired by former U.S. Ambassador to Finland Marilyn Ware, comprises historians, archivists, genealogists, migration experts, former ambassadors, and others interested in the life and contributions of John Morton.

ADVISORY BOARD

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*Passed away 11/26/09



What We're Working On

Born in Ridley, Pennsylvania, in 1725 to descendents of original Finnish immigrants to the Delaware Valley, John Morton led a life dedicated to public service and was among the most respected statesmen in Colonial America.

Morton was a member and Speaker of Pennsylvania's Provincial Assembly for nearly three decades and served as High Sheriff of Chester County (now Delaware County) and as a justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Morton was a delegate from Pennsylvania to the secretive Stamp Act Congress placing him at the center of the controversy over unjust British taxation policies, and joined other members of the Continental Congress in Philadelphia to approve and sign the most important political document in American history. Along with Benjamin Franklin and James Wilson, Morton voted in favor of the Declaration of Independence, breaking the swing vote in the Pennsylvania delegation. Some say that without Morton's signature, the fate of our fledgling republic may have been jeopardized.

Although a key figure in the cause for American independence, John Morton is absent from many of the recorded histories. Using current research and innovative strategies, the John Morton Project seeks to reveal Morton's life as a colonial statesman and the origins of his ancestors by discovering new documentary evidence in the United States, Finland, and Sweden. The partnership of donors, scholars, and diplomats from Finland and the United States makes the project a truly multicultural endeavor.

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The Start of an International Exploration



When Marilyn Ware was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Finland by President George W. Bush in 2005, and took her post in Helsinki, she discovered that a leader of the American quest for independence, John Morton, was of Finnish descent. John Morton was a key player in the momentous political events of 1776 and an accomplished colonial

legislator; active in the political culture of southeastern Pennsylvania for most of his life.

Unlike most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, John Morton's ancestors were not immigrants from the British Isles; instead a family descended from the first settlers to arrive in Delaware Valley, known then as New Sweden and home to many Finns. In a nation of immigrants, immigration history takes on vital importance, and the life story of a non-British founding father was equally compelling.

Ambassador Ware found that little historical research had been done on John Morton so while serving as Ambassador in Finland, she joined forces with some of the most distinguished Finnish and American representatives, genealogists, and historians to compile as much available information as possible in one definitive biography. Recognizing that the American Revolution has received ample attention from the academic community over the years, this distinguished group of advisors seeks to apply the many new and inventive ways used today to construct the narrative on John Morton.

The John Morton Project research continues, even after Ambassador Ware's retirement from diplomatic service and return to the United States. The John Morton Project has been supported by generous contributors from the United States and Finland.

Additional research requires additional financial resources. If you can help the project with a financial contribution, please contact Evelyn Lim at the Ware Family Office at 303-534-5157.



2010 Conference...

The John Morton Project is pleased to announce that dates have been set for our first academic conference which will be held in Helsinki this summer. The John Morton Project Advisory Board and researchers will gather there to present their research and findings from **June 14th to 16th, 2010**.

A meeting of the Advisory Board was held in November 2008 in Philadelphia, PA where John Morton and many other courageous men of his time took action that forever changed the world. This distinguished gathering, which included Ambassador Lintu, Ambassador Lassila and an appearance by Governor Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania, discussed Morton, his ancestry and his impact on the histories of both Finland and the United States. The purpose of the Philadelphia meeting was to determine how the project would proceed; potentially concluding with a comprehensive history of John Morton to be published, and to identify additional research required to reach that end. The discussion was lively and informative and generated a great deal of

enthusiasm to pursue the story of this oft forgotten and courageous signer of the Declaration of Independence.

With an additional year of research under our belts, the 2010 conference is certain to be even more enlightening. Our hope is that, by bringing the conference to Helsinki, we will give more Finns an opportunity to participate and to learn about the forgotten role a brave man of Finnish descent played in the founding of a new nation and expand the ties between our great countries.

Details and updates on the conference will be provided in the coming months on the John Morton Project web page www.johnmortonproject.com.

Project Loses Great Friend and Contributor



Ambassador of Sweden Jan Eliasson (left) and Dr. Peter S. Craig, Knight First Class of the Royal Order of the Polar Star.

Peter Stebbins Craig, our friend and Advisory Board Member for the John Morton Project passed away peacefully at age 81 after a brief illness on Thursday, November 26, 2009, surrounded by family in the home he had lived in for more than 50 years. A brilliant genealogist, Peter Craig was a friend to many, a prolific author on the Swedish Colonial Period in the Delaware Valley, and will be greatly missed.

Mr. Craig was the most notable expert on the early Swedish settlements on the Delaware and a well respected scholar. He wrote volumes on the families and settlements, providing many well-documented resources to those of us researching these families. His numerous publications include extensive work on the Finns of New Sweden and the Delaware Valley—specifically Märten Mårtensson, an original Finnish settler of Pennsylvania and great-grandfather of John Morton. Craig authored: *1671 Census of the Delaware*; *The Swedish Hulings*; *The 1693 Census of the Swedes on the Delaware*; *The Swedish ancestry of Moses Justus of Schuylers County, Illinois* and *The family of Nils Larsson Friend*.

Craig was both a Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists and a Fellow of The Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania and in November of 2002 was knighted First Class of the Royal Order of the

Polar Star; created as the Swedish order of chivalry by King Frederick I of Sweden in 1748 as a reward for Swedish and foreign “civic merits, for devotion to duty, for science, literary, learned and useful works and for new and beneficial institutions”. Since 1975 the order is only awarded to foreigners and members of the royal family. It is often awarded to foreign office holders (such as Prime and Senior Ministers) during Swedish state visits. With this award, Peter Craig was recognized among the elite for his research and commitment to unearthing the Swedes story in the U.S.

Mr. Craig had been working on the fifth volume of his study examining the census records of the New Sweden colony in Pennsylvania. This most recent volume covers the years 1750 through 1759 and John Morton is referenced repeatedly in both this volume, and a proposed sixth which Mr. Craig had hoped to complete before the conference in Finland this coming summer. It was anticipated that his research would lead to new insights about Morton’s role in his Finnish community and contribute to a fuller understanding of this founding father.

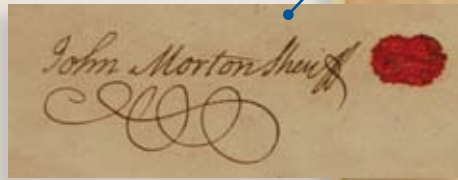
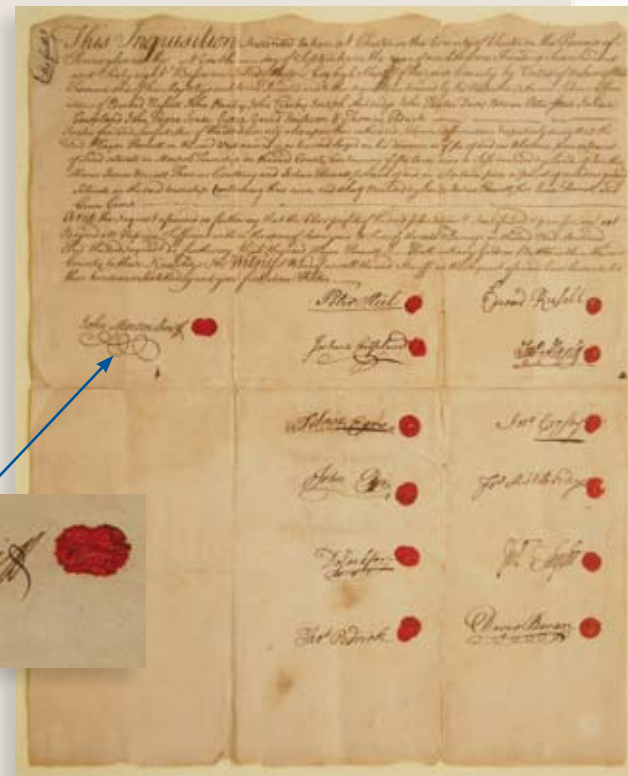
Everyone at the John Morton Project expresses our deepest sympathy to the family of Peter S. Craig. He will be sorely missed.



Document Signed by John Morton in 1768 Discovered

This document was penned and signed by John Morton while serving as Sheriff of Chester County, Pennsylvania. Morton had been a member of Pennsylvania’s Provincial Assembly since 1756, but a decade later (in 1766) resigned his position as Assemblyman to take on the duties of High Sheriff. The fact that only a few years earlier, in 1764, Morton had been commissioned as Justice of the Peace shows his commitment to public service. It also indicates how common it was in provincial America to hold multiple offices, and by dedicating himself solely to his duties as Sheriff, Morton was perhaps displaying a commitment to local matters uncommon to a politician of his renown.

Though only one of many writs signed by Morton as Sheriff of Chester County, this document is highlighted here for a number of reasons. First, in spite of being two hundred and forty years old, this piece of parchment is in phenomenal condition, and Morton’s bold hand remains as clear as if newly penned. Also, this document has only recently come into the possession of the Institute of Migration at the University of Turku, Finland. The Institute’s director, Dr. Olavi Koivukangas, is a member of the John Morton Project Advisory Board and was kind enough to provide a transcription and high-quality digital scans of the original document which he found and purchased in Hawaii. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly this writ, while an ordinary piece of business for a sheriff, is evidence of John Morton’s pivotal role in local community affairs.



The writ grants to a local man named Hayes Pennell, the sum of fifty-three acres in Marpole Township (now Marple Township in Delaware County). Pennell has no known property in the county, and the said property would be bounded by a number of his kinsmen. More important than the details of the transaction however, is the fact that all such business, regardless of the size of the tract of land, passed through Morton. By 1768, he had already served as a Pennsylvania delegate to the Stamp Act Congress, which was to that point the most important gathering in the march toward independence. Not only was Morton needed at the highest level of provincial politics, but his local community also required his sound judgment and personal attention. His willingness to answer both these calls to duty tells us a great deal about not only his work ethic, but also his dedication to the community into which he was born.

This writ and a complete transcription and summary can be found among several other documents pertaining to the life and work of John Morton at www.johnmortonproject.com.

What We’re Working On —continued from cover



This mural of John Morton signing Declaration of Independence hangs in the American Swedish Historical Museum in Philadelphia

Finnish scholars, **Dr. Auvo Kostianen** and **Dr. Olavi Koivukangas**, are exploring a firm link between John Morton, and the earliest Finnish settlers of the Delaware Valley of Pennsylvania.

- **Dr. Koivukangas**, recently retired Director of the University of Turku’s Institute of Migration, has been employing traditional scholarly techniques to establish the path John Morton’s ancestors took on their journey from Finland, through Sweden, and on to the Delaware Valley of Pennsylvania.

- **Dr. Kostianen**, of the University of Turku, an expert in Finnish migration to America, has turned to the science of DNA in order to trace the exact point of origin of John Morton’s ancestors in Finland. Members of the Finnish Marttinen family believe themselves to be direct relations of John Morton, and contend that his great-grandfather Marten Martensson was born in the town of Rautalampi, Finland. A few members of the Marttinen family are undergoing DNA testing to be compared with known descendents of John Morton in the United States. The results should substantiate whether or not the suggested connection between Morton and Rautalampi factually exists.

American historians **Dr. Robert E. Wright** and **Dr. Peter Lillback** are focusing their research more specifically on John Morton the man; namely his life as a Provincial politician and signer of the Declaration of Independence.

- **Dr. Wright**, Chair of Political Economy Division of Social Sciences at Augustana College, South Dakota, USA is concentrating his research on the economic realities of Morton’s Pennsylvania and the colonies as a whole. The core of Dr. Wright’s project will be to highlight the immediate economic effect of Morton’s decisions as both a local and colony-wide political figure.

- **Dr. Lillback**, professor of historical theology and President of Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, is bringing his interest and skill in academic research to uncover Morton’s role in the Stamp Act Congress and his shared ideals with the Sons of Liberty. Morton’s presence at the Congress suggests his preeminence among colonial statesmen, and Dr. Lillback’s work may help determine the extent of his role there, as well as his overall zeal for the cause of independence.

The findings of all these contributors and more will be presented at the international conference in June and more details as well as some of the supporting documents can be found at www.johnmortonproject.com.