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.njparksonline.org

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 devel-
opment of
the area by
building a
bridge across
Alloways
Creek in 1708.
Now known as “Hancocks Bridge,” it permitted pas-
sage 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.
In the 18th 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.


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.

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.

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.

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.

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.