

Tipton, John ^[1]

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by Patricia J. Miller, 1996

13 Aug. 1730–April 1813

John Tipton, North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee statesman, was born in Baltimore, Md., the son of Jonathan II and Elizabeth Tipton. He was the brother of Joseph Tipton, who was a delegate to the North Carolina Constitutional Convention in 1788 and served in the North Carolina Continental Line during the Revolutionary War; the father of Samuel Tipton, who served in the Tennessee house from 1801 to 1805 and founded Duffield Academy in Elizabethton, Tenn.; the grandfather of Jonathan Caswell Tipton, who served in the Tennessee house, and Abraham Tipton, who served in the Tennessee senate; and the great-grandfather of Albert Jackson Tipton, who served in the Tennessee house as a member of the Know-Nothing party.

Early in his life Tipton moved to Virginia, where he was a founder of Woodstock in Dunmore (later Shenandoah) County, a justice of the peace for Beckford Parish, and county sheriff. He was an organizer and signer of the Independence Resolution of Woodstock and served in Lord Dunmore's War under Andrew Lewis in 1774. Active in Virginia politics, Tipton served in the House of Burgesses in 1774 and the House of Delegates in 1776–77 and 1778–81. Although over forty, Tipton was a recruiting officer for the Continental army and fought throughout the Revolutionary War with seven of his sons.

Tipton followed his brother Joseph, who had emigrated from Virginia around 1775, to North Carolina sometime in the early 1780s and immediately became involved in politics. A leader in the establishment of the state of Franklin ^[2], he represented Washington County ^[3] in the Franklin conventions of 1784 and 1785. Tipton, however, was among the first Franklinites to resume allegiance to North Carolina and became a political opponent to the state of Franklin leader, John Sevier ^[4]. Elected to the North Carolina General Assembly ^[5] over Sevier, he served as a senator in 1786 and 1788. Tipton's and Sevier's western North Carolina factions were involved in a civil war for three years, with each holding court and establishing militias. Court records and official papers were carried off by raiding parties from both sides. Tipton's forces were finally victorious at a battle near his Jonesboro, Tenn., home in 1788.

A delegate to the 1788 North Carolina Constitutional Convention ^[6] in Hillsborough ^[7], Tipton voted against ratifying the federal constitution. Granted 750 acres before the convention and 1,000 after it, he owned 2,750 acres of land, according to convention records.

When North Carolina ceded the Tennessee lands to the United States in 1789, Tipton, no longer a North Carolinian, continued to be active politically, serving as a member of the House of the Territory of the United States South of the Ohio River. Likewise, he quickly became involved in Tennessee government, representing Washington County in the first and second Tennessee General Assemblies ^[8]. He also helped draft the Tennessee constitution at the 1796 convention.

Tipton married Mary Butler, the daughter of Thomas Butler, about 1753. They had nine sons: Samuel, Benjamin, Abraham, William, Isaac, Jacob, John, Thomas, and Jonathan III. He married Mrs. Martha Denton Moore, the daughter of Abraham Denton and the widow of James Moore, on 22 July 1779. They had a son, Abraham.

An Episcopalian, Tipton was a trustee of Washington College ^[9] in 1795. He died at his home near Johnson City, Tenn., and was buried at the Tipton homeplace on Sinclair Creek near the Washington-Carter County line.

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