


Newly Published Book Explores Life and Legacy of Delaware Statesman John Dickinson

ST. JONES NECK, Del. – A new anthology of essays and lectures published by the Delaware Heritage Commission explores the life and career of John Dickinson, whose influential role as a colonial patriot and statesman of the early Republic earned him the nickname “Penman of the Revolution.”

“Delaware’s John Dickinson: The Constant Watchman of Liberty” commemorates the [250th anniversary](#) of the publication of Dickinson’s “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies,” the first widely-read treatise laying out the American cause for unity in resistance to British colonial oppression, published in the winter of 1767-68. The 186-page, hardcover volume explores Dickinson’s legacy through the writings of noted Dickinson scholars and eminent Delawareans, including a preface by Gov. John Carney.

“John Dickinson, in many ways, was the architect of what we now call the ‘Delaware Way.’ He sought compromise, took nuanced political stances without regard to partisanship, and put his country over his political beliefs,” said Gov. Carney. “I want to thank The Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion, the Delaware Heritage Commission and my friend, John Sweeney, for putting together this book about one of the little known giants of American history.”

“Believe it or not, Delawareans often ask me ‘Who was John  Dickinson?’ Here was a Delawarean who fought slavery when people like Washington and Jefferson accepted it. Here was a man who demanded freedom of religion for all when other Founding Fathers were willing to impose their beliefs on others. Here was a man who led the fight to enshrine

individual rights in the U.S. Constitution,” said the book’s editor, John Sweeney, a Dickinson scholar and former editor at the Wilmington News Journal. “And that’s only a small portion of what he did for us, for our freedom. Delawareans should not only know who he was, they should be proud of him and they should point to him as example of what a political leader should be.”

“Dickinson is simply the greatest political thinker and writer ever associated with our state. He was also an active participant in the great events of his era, which led to the founding of our nation,” said Battle Robinson, retired Family Court judge and past president of the Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion, who penned the book’s introduction. “In commissioning this book, the Friends of the Dickinson Mansion hope to make Dickinson and his many contributions better known and appreciated.”

The publication features contributions from former Delaware governors J. Caleb Boggs, Charles L. Terry Jr. and Russell W. Peterson; former Delaware Supreme Court justices Randy J. Holland, Richard S. Rodney and James M. Tunnell, Jr.; historians Jane E. Calvert, Milton E. Flower, John A. Munroe, J.H. Powell, Frederick B. Tolles and Edwin Wolf II; Harold L. Rubendall, former president of Dickinson College; and Gloria Henry and Vertie Lee of the John Dickinson Plantation.

“The title of a recent article about Dickinson by John Sweeney reads, ‘The Most Important Founding Father You’ve Never Heard Of.’ It’s sadly true that Delaware’s John Dickinson has gotten short shrift from most historians since his death in 1808,” said Dick Carter, chairman of the Delaware Heritage Commission. “Dickinson was indeed one of the central figures in the creation of the United States of America. I hope that this new book will begin the much-needed and long overdue process of giving this great Delaware statesman the attention his remarkable life so richly deserves. It has been a real honor to have been involved in its publication.”

The book was commissioned by the Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion, a nonprofit, charitable organization dedicated to the extension of knowledge about Dickinson and the preservation of his historic home, now a state museum. The book was produced as a joint effort of the Friends, the Delaware Department of State and the Delaware Heritage Commission.

“Delaware’s John Dickinson: The Constant Watchman of Liberty” is currently available for sale at the John Dickinson Plantation, the Delaware Public Archives and on the [ShopDelaware](#) website.