

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

THE NORTH OF IRELAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

LISBURN BRANCH

JOHN HANCOCK JUN.

John Hancock Jun., son of prosperous linen-merchant, John Hancock and his wife, Elizabeth Hunter, Quakers, was born 12th August 1762. John in his will left £1,000 for land on which to build a school for the education of the children of members of the Society of Friends. The school, opened in 1774, is now known as Friends' School, Lisburn.

John Hancock Jun. owned a large bleaching concern at Lambeg, which later was owned by Messrs. Richardson, Sons & Owden. He also had a bakery in Market Square. On a religious visit to Wexford in 1798 he was captured by the rebels.

He was a philanthropist and in 1800, a famine year, he imported 200 tons of Indian Meal from Philadelphia, the first time this grain was seen in Ulster, and 500 barrels of American flour. He sold these at cost price to the needy people of the Lisburn area. In 1811 his bleach green at Lambeg was broken into and 3 webs of linen were stolen. He refused to prosecute the accused, knowing the penalty would be death. Later, with the help of other linen merchants, they were able to have Sir Samuel Romily M.P., bring about a bill for the milder punishment of bleachgreen robbers. In 1817, in another period of famine, along with John Rogers, he purchased wheels for spinning flax with both hands and opened an unsuccessful school for training needy girls and women, guaranteeing the purchase of their work.

He contributed to the "Belfast Magazine" [1808 – 1814], editing it for a period, writing under the pseudonym "K".

John married Sarah Greer [died 1794] on June 16th 1784 and had four sons and two daughters. He died on 25th September 1823 and, although disowned by the Quakers in 1801, he was buried in Friends' Burying Ground, which is in Railway Street, Lisburn.