



225th Anniversary
1789-2014



John Laurance

Born:

1750

near Falmouth, England

Received Commission:

May 6, 1794

**District of New York
service:**

1794-1796

Died:

November 11, 1810

New York, NY

Not much is known about the early life of John Laurance, including the identity of his parents. In 1767, Laurance, age 17, he left England for New York City. He read law there with Cadwallader Colden. Laurance was admitted to the New York bar in 1772 and established a private practice in New York City.

John Laurance's law practice was interrupted by military service. He served in the Continental Army during the Revolution (1775-1782), reaching the rank of major. Laurance was judge advocate general on General George Washington's staff. In that capacity, Laurance was the prosecutor at the 1780 spy trial of Major John André.

Following his military service, John Laurance became active in politics. He first represented New York City in the New York State Assembly (1783 and 1785), and later was a State Senator (1788 -1790). In between, from 1785-1787, he was a delegate to the Continental Congress. Laurance was elected to represent New York City and Westchester County in the new U.S. House of Representatives, serving between 1789 and 1793.

In May 1794, John Laurance was nominated by President Washington to a seat on the District Court for the District of New York. He served only two years, however, resigning in 1794, when he was elected to fill a seat in the U.S. Senate vacated by Rufus King. It is noteworthy that during his short judicial tenure, Judge Laurance became the first federal judge to have one of his decisions reviewed by the Supreme Court.

In addition to his many political and legal pursuits, Laurance served as a trustee of Columbia University and a regent of the University of the State of New York.

Sources:

AMERICAN NATIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Biographical Directory of Federal Judges, available at <http://www.fjc.gov/>.