

*The*  
FIFTEENTH GOVERNOR  
*of*  
C O N N E C T I C U T  
*was*  
WILLIAM PITKIN

An East Hartford boy who was chosen town collector at the age of nineteen years, and becoming interested in military affairs in the stormy period preceding the Revolution, boldly denounced the tyranny of the mother country

W I L L I A M

P I T K I N

**W**ILLIAM Pitkin, the governor who distinguished himself during the excitement attending the passage of the Stamp Act, by his bold uncompromising advocacy of the cause of the colonies, was born April 30, 1694, in the town of East Hartford. Of his early life and education we know very little. He was a member of the Pitkin family that furnished a number of brilliant men to the commonwealth at different periods. At the age of nineteen William Pitkin was chosen town collector. He was afterward a representative in the General Assembly from 1728 to 1734. During these years he took a deep interest in military affairs, becoming a captain of the Train Band in 1730 and a colonel in 1734. In 1734 he became a member of the governor's council, and the year following was appointed a judge of the County Court. He occupied this position until 1752. Governor Pitkin was also a judge of the Superior Court, and served as chief justice of the Supreme Court for twelve years.

In all matters that pertained to the future welfare of Connecticut, and in the days when the colony was rearing the structure of its future freedom, Governor Pitkin was an important figure.

He was a member of the famous Albany convention of 1754, when Franklin offered a plan for the union of the colonies. Governor Pitkin also served on the committee, of which Franklin was chairman, appointed by the convention to draft a constitution. Always a strong exponent of colonial rights, Pitkin was one of the first in Connecticut to resist the Stamp Act, when the British ministry undertook to foist that measure on the colonies. He was thoroughly uncompromising in his denunciation of the act, and when on October 29, 1765, Governor Fitch took the oath to uphold it, William Pitkin, then lieutenant governor, showed his courage in a forcible manner. Pitkin, together with several other prominent men, including Jonathan Trumbull, were in the room where Governor Fitch and members of the council were to take the oath to support the Act. Pitkin indignantly rebelled against the action of the governor, and in company with the sturdy Trumbull, deliberately left the room while the oath was being administered. This patriotic act was thoroughly commended by the majority of the people of Connecticut, and they manifested their approbation in a substantial way when, in the following May, 1766, he was elected governor of the colony by an overwhelming majority.

A newspaper of that day rather facetiously remarked, in commenting on the election, that Pitkin's majority over Fitch—who had fallen into popular disfavor—"was so great that the votes were not counted." Governor Pitkin's course through the stormy period

preceding the Revolution was uniformly consistent and courageously patriotic, which called forth the plaudits of his constituents. He died while in office, in October, 1769.

His biographer tells us that the governor was "of commanding appearance, highly affable and pleasing in manner." The following inscription is on his monument: "Here lieth interred the body of William Pitkin, Esq.—late Governor of the Colony of Connecticut. To the God of Nature indebted for all his talents, he aimed to employ them in Religion, without affectation, chearful, Humble, and Temperate, zealous and bold for the Truth, Faithful in distributing Justice, Scattering away Evil with his Eye, an Example of Christian Virtue, a Patron of his Country, a Benefactor to the Poor, a Tender Parent, and Faithful Friend. Twelve years he presided in the Superior Court, and three and a half Governor in chief. After serving his generation by the will of God, with calmness and serenity, fell on sleep, the 1st day of October, A. D., 1769—in the 76th year of his age."