

DICTIONARY  
OF  
American Biography

VOLUME IV  
FRANCIS - HIBBARD

---

*Edited by*

ALLEN JOHNSON  
AND DUMAS MALONE

Charles Scribner's Sons *New York*

## Hanson

[G. A. Hanson, *Old Kent* (1876); *Md. Hist. Mag.*, June, Sept. 1911, Mar. 1926; *Tercentenary Hist. of Md.* (1925), vol. I, by M. P. Andrews, vol. IV, by H. F. Powell; G. M. Brumbaugh, *Maryland Records* (1928); E. S. Riley, *The Ancient City—A Hist. of Annapolis in Md.* (1887); *Federal Gazette & Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, Jan. 18, 1806.] W.G.E.

**HANSON, ALEXANDER CONTEE** (Feb. 27, 1786–Apr. 23, 1819), editor, representative and senator from Maryland, was born at Annapolis, the second son of Alexander Contee Hanson [q.v.] and Rebeca (Howard) Hanson. He was graduated from St. John's College in 1802, and practised law in his native city. He came from a line of fighting patriots and was nourished in Federalism as in a religion. In 1808 he founded a newspaper, the *Federal Republican*, in Baltimore, to represent extreme Federalist opinion. As editor-in-chief he secured Jacob Wagner, who had served in the State Department under Pickering and entertained an absolute aversion toward Jefferson and Madison. Hanson shared the conviction of most Federalists that the Republican statesmen were "bound over" to French interests, and Wagner's "inside information" concerning diplomacy was freely used to spread this view. For statements conceived to be "mutinous and highly reproachful to the President" made in an article on the Embargo, published Nov. 7, 1808, Hanson, who was a lieutenant in the 39th Regiment of Maryland militia, was court-martialed, but he defended himself with ability and success. As the country drifted toward war with England the *Federal Republican* became more bitter. Numerous threats were issued against it. On June 20, 1812, two days after the declaration of war, an editorial appeared, beginning "Thou hast done a deed whereat Valour will weep." The policy of the paper was defined as opposition to the war and hostility to Madison, who was stigmatized as the tool of Bonaparte. On June 22, a mob of infuriated Republicans demolished the newspaper plant, even tearing down the walls. Thereupon, following the advice of influential Federalists, Hanson decided to take a stand for freedom of opinion and of the press. A building was secured at 45 Charles St., and transformed into a veritable arsenal. On July 27, the paper was reissued from Georgetown, D. C., but circulated from Baltimore. This issue of the journal contained an attack upon the city government for favoritism toward the leaders of the Baltimore mob. The following day the house on Charles Street was surrounded and doors and windows were smashed. The Federalists responded with gun shots. One man was killed in the crowd. The militia deported itself irresolutely. Finally,

## Hanson

when a cannon was dragged before the newspaper office, the defenders consented to compromise with the mayor of Baltimore and the commander of the militia. In return for promises of safety for life and property, they consented to a temporary surrender. Neither of these promises was fulfilled, however. The place of safety proved to be the jail, which, since the militia was immediately disbanded, was easily forced during the night. A butcher and a French tailor led the mob. The offending Federalists were clubbed into insensibility and hurled out upon the jail steps where the attack was continued with penknives, matches, and candle-grease poured upon the eyelids. Gen. James M. Lingan was killed and Gen. Henry (Light-Horse Harry) Lee received injuries from which he never fully recovered. Hanson was beaten into unconsciousness, but later was assisted to escape to his country estate. By Aug. 3, he was reissuing his paper from Georgetown.

Baltimore exonerated the rioters, and although the committee of grievances and courts of justice of the Maryland House of Delegates later upheld the Federalists, a wave of apprehension was felt lest this violent outbreak should prove the precursor of Republican terrorism. This Federalist reaction brought about Hanson's election to Congress. He took his seat in March 1813, continuing his anti-administration charges in the House. In 1816, he resigned in the hope of saving the local Federalist cause by entering state politics, but he failed in the elections for the House of Delegates. He was then appointed United States senator to complete the term of Senator Harper (resigned), and he served in this capacity from Jan. 2, 1817, until his death. Ill health prevented him from continuous activity in the Senate. Hanson married Priscilla Dorsey, June 24, 1805. He died at his estate, "Belmont," near Elkridge.

[The Md. Hist. Soc. possesses manuscript letters of Hanson to George C. Washington, 1817–18, and a collection called "Hanson Pamphlets," being the writings of Hanson's father, which contains a manuscript introduction, written (1851–52) by C. W. Hanson, treating of the family history. Accounts of the Baltimore riots are found in J. B. McMaster, *A Hist. of the People of the U. S.*, vol. III (1892); Henry Adams, *Hist. of the U. S. A.*, vol. VI (1891); J. T. Scharf, *Hist. of Md.* (1879), vol. III; and D. T. Lynch, *An Epoch and a Man: Martin Van Buren* (1929). See also *Trial of Alexander Contee Hanson, Esq., A Lieutenant in a Company of Militia, etc.* (1809); *Interesting Papers Relative to the Recent Riots at Baltimore* (1812); *Baltimore Patriot and Mercantile Advertiser*, Apr. 24, 1819; files of the *Federal Republican*.] K.J.G.

**HANSON, JOHN** (Apr. 13, 1721–Nov. 22, 1783), Revolutionary leader, member of the Continental Congress, son of Samuel and Elizabeth

(Story) Hanson, was descended from Roger de Rastrick, who was living in Yorkshire, England, in the middle of the thirteenth century. (The name was changed from De Rastrick to Hanson, Henry's son, in 1330.) A descendant married a connection of the Swedish royal family; and his son became an officer in the army of Gustavus Adolphus. In 1642 four sons of this soldier were sent by Queen Christina to the New World in the care of John Printz, governor of New Sweden. They removed from Tinicum Island, in the Delaware River, to Kent Island, Md., in 1653, and about three years later the youngest of the four, John Hanson, established the family in Charles County. His son, Samuel, was elected a member of the General Assembly of Maryland in 1716 and 1728, and served his county as sheriff, commissary, clerk, and member of the board of visitors of the county school. John, Samuel's son, was born at "Mulberry Grove," Charles County, in 1721. He entered public life in 1757 as a representative of Charles County in the Assembly, and served nearly every year from 1757 to 1773, when he removed to Frederick County. Under the influence of that progressive frontier section of the province he continued to serve in the Assembly until his election, in 1779, as a delegate to the Continental Congress.

Hanson was a member of the committee of the legislature which drafted instructions to the Maryland delegates to the Stamp-Act Congress in New York (1765). He signed the non-importation agreement of Maryland, which was adopted June 22, 1769, at a meeting of county committees as a protest against the Townshend Acts. He was chairman of the meeting in Frederick County which in June 1774 passed resolutions to stop all trade with Great Britain and the West Indies until the Acts of Parliament blocking the Port of Boston were repealed. As a member of the Maryland Convention, he signed July 26, 1775, the Association of the Freemen of Maryland which approved the use of arms to repel British troops. As chairman of the Committee of Observation, first for all Frederick County and subsequently for the Middle District, Hanson was active in raising troops and providing arms and ammunition. He was one of a committee of three chosen by the Maryland Convention to establish a gun-lock factory in Frederick. In July 1775 he wrote to the president of the Continental Congress warning him of an expedition by Loyalists and Indians against the Maryland frontier, a danger which was removed only by the arrest of the leaders, Nov. 19, 1775, near Hagerstown. Under Hanson's leadership the delegates from Frederick County to the

Maryland Convention advocated independence several months before such sentiment was dominant in the other counties, and he held that every resolution of the Convention tending to separate Maryland from a majority of the colonies without the consent of the people was destructive of its internal safety. The Maryland Assembly elected him a delegate to the Continental Congress on Dec. 22, 1779. He took his seat in that body June 14, 1780. At this time the Maryland delegates were alone in refusing to ratify the Articles of Confederation. They had instructions not to ratify until Virginia and other states had relinquished their claims to the unsettled territory extending westward to the Mississippi River. John Hanson and his colleague Daniel Carroll [q.v.] labored successfully for this relinquishment. The ratification of the Articles of Confederation was completed Mar. 1, 1781, and on Nov. 5 of that year Hanson was elected president of the Congress of the Confederacy. He retired from public life at the close of his term of one year and died at Oxon Hill, Prince Georges County. Hanson's wife was Jane Contee of Prince Georges County. They had nine children, one of whom, Alexander Contee Hanson [q.v.], became chancellor of Maryland.

[Geo. A. Hanson, *Old Kent* (1876); J. T. Scharf, *Hist. of Western Md.* (1882); T. J. C. Williams, *Hist. of Frederick County, Md.* (1910); J. M. Hammond, *Colonial Mansions of Md. and Del.* (1914); *Tercenary Hist. of Md.* (1925), vol. IV, by H. F. Powell; "Proceedings in the Senate and House of Representatives upon the Reception and Acceptance from the State of Maryland of the Statues of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, and of John Hanson, Erected in Statuary Hall of the Capitol," *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., pp. 1506 ff., 1541 ff., and *Sen. Doc. No. 13*, 58 Cong., Special Sess.; *Maryland Gazette* (Annapolis), Nov. 27, 1783.] N. D. M.

**HANSON, ROGER WEIGHTMAN** (Aug. 27, 1827-Jan. 4, 1863), Confederate general, was born in Winchester, Ky., the second son of Samuel Hanson, lawyer and member of the legislature, and of Matilda (Calloway) Hanson. His father, who came of the Maryland Hanson family and was a native of Alexandria, Va., had moved to Kentucky in 1807. By nature impetuous and daring, Roger Weightman Hanson served as first lieutenant in the Mexican War under Capt. J. S. ("Cerro Gordo") Williams. In a duel after his return he received a wound which shortened one leg and gave him thereafter a peculiar gait. During convalescence he read law. He began to practise at home, then went to California with the gold rush, but returned with nothing added to his fortune. In 1851, opposing his old commander for a seat in the legislature, he lost by six votes; but two years later he was successful and became a rep-