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Brenton Simons Receives First-Ever John Adams Medal for Outstanding Merit in the Study of History and Lifetime Achievement in Institutional Leadership from the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

October 4, 2021 – Boston, Massachusetts – American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS) – a national center for family history, heritage, and culture – announced that D. Brenton Simons, the organization’s longtime President and CEO, has received the first-ever John Adams Medal from the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The new award was presented to Simons by Brent J. Andersen, President of the Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the Revolution, during the General Society of the Revolution’s triennial, a gala at the Fairmont Copley Plaza hotel on October 2, 2021, an event held for more than one hundred members of the organization attending from across the United States.



This award recognizes an individual for outstanding merit and lifetime achievement in the leadership of an institution, including societies, museums, archives, agencies, and other entities, that advances scholarship in the study of American history, including national, regional or local history, genealogy, military history, New England history, and related topics. It will be awarded annually at the Massachusetts Society’s signature event, the John Adams Treaty of Paris (1783) Dinner, each September.

The medal’s first recipient, Brenton Simons, was selected because he “has set the stage for a new generation to immerse themselves in family history with publications, social media, online research, and public TV programing,” Sons of the Revolution President Brent J. Andersen explained. “He’s reached millions of people all over the world and stimulated a love of history and research.”

The John Adams Medal commemorates the life and legacy of one America’s Founding Fathers, John Adams, President of the United States from 1797 to 1801, a statesman and diplomat from

Massachusetts who, prior to the presidency, served as the nation's first Vice President, first Minister to England, and first Minister to The Netherlands.

"John Adams was an invaluable contributor to the formation of our country and its founding ideals of liberty, equality, and justice, and I admire him greatly," said Simons. "The Sons of the Revolution deserve tremendous thanks for establishing an award that recognizes the valuable contributions of those who advance the work of the American history and genealogical communities," Simons continued. "I am truly honored to be the first recipient of such an important award."

Simons previously received the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History in 2006 for his book, *Witches, Rakes, and Rogues*, and is presently serving on two State Commissions by appointment of Governor Charles D. Baker: as Vice Chair of the Plymouth 400th Anniversary State Commission and as a member of the Commission to Review the Seal and Motto of Massachusetts. As a nonprofit leader, Simons is recognized for influencing the face of nonprofit-based genealogy in America by bringing the best scholarship to millions of users for more than fifteen years as President and CEO of American Ancestors. He has overseen a historic expansion of the organization—the founding genealogical institution in America—which now serves almost 400,000 members and millions of online users with more than 1.4 billion searchable names. Simons also serves as Secretary of the Board of Directors of *The New England Quarterly*, the premier journal of New England history, life, and letters, and as an officer or member of the boards of several other historical and genealogical organizations.

The face of the gold medal depicts John Adams in profile as president, with his dates of birth and death. Around the face is inscribed: President - Statesman - Diplomat - Founding Father. On the reverse there is an image in relief of the signing of the Treaty of Paris taken from Benjamin West's unfinished painting of the United States delegation as they prepare to negotiate and sign the treaty. Pictured from left are John Jay, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Henry Laurens, and William Temple Franklin. Above the image is inscribed the quote by Adams: "Liberty cannot be preserved without general knowledge among the people." Below, "Treaty of Paris III September MDCCLXXXIII." All surrounded by "Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." The John Adams Medal was designed by Shervin B. Hawley.

The Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a state society within the General Society of the Sons of the Revolution, an organization founded in 1876, and currently headquartered in Williamsburg, VA. It educates the public about the American Revolution, the United States Constitution, and the patriots who supported those causes during the period of 1775-1789.

About American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society

American Ancestors is a national center for family history, heritage, and culture. It is the global brand of New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), America's oldest and largest genealogical society (founded 1845). American Ancestors serves almost 400,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world through its website [AmericanAncestors.org](https://www.AmericanAncestors.org) with more than 1.4 billion names in its databases. Its national headquarters, located in Boston's Back Bay, is home to a world-class research center and archive, an expert staff, and the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center. It maintains a

publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including the *Register*, the leading journal of American genealogy since 1847; *American Ancestors*, its award-winning magazine; and *Mayflower Descendant*, a quarterly journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history, and books, including *Ancestors of American Presidents*, the Great Migration series, and more.

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