

## CHAPTER II

# *Trenton and Trentonians in the Revolutionary Era*

BY HAMILTON SCHUYLER

### *I. Local Conditions*

ANYONE who contemplates at this late day a fresh treatment of conditions, events and persons pertaining to the Revolutionary era here in Trenton, will find himself forestalled by several eminent authors, with Stryker at their head, who have thoroughly gleaned the main field and thus have left little or nothing of the first importance to be said.

In addition to accredited local historians such as Raum, Stryker, Hall and Lee, occasional writers have dealt in pamphlets and newspaper articles with minor phases which had previously been ignored or only incidentally touched upon. All therefore that a writer can hope to do today is to collate and summarize the facts which the researches of others have revealed.

It must be borne in mind that the scope of the present chapter is a limited one, of purely local significance, and only incidentally includes some observations over a wider field, and this merely to elucidate the conditions prevailing here in Trenton in those times. The actual military operations in and about Trenton do not fall within the task assigned to the present writer, but will be fully treated in the following chapter.

The task of the present writer is simply to furnish as complete a resume, as the sources permit, of the conditions in Trenton during the crucial period associated with the War of the Revolution, with brief references to the leading men who were locally concerned. What the reader has a right to expect is that he shall be informed as far as the circumstances and the knowledge permit not only of what transpired here, but what was the mood and temper of the people who lived here and how they reacted to the supreme crisis which resulted in the attainment of political independence.

As a preliminary to an understanding of our subject, it is important to recall the general conditions, commercial, social and political, which prevailed here during the period dealt with.

Although Trenton was little more than a small village at that time, containing probably not more than five hundred inhabitants in all, it was, nevertheless, a place of some importance owing to its strategic situation on the Delaware River at the head of tidewater, and also as being the main station on the post road between the two cities of New York and Philadelphia. All travel between the North and the South normally passed through Trenton, much as it does today, and hence the town was one familiar to a multitude who had occasion to travel in either direction.

### **IMPRESSIONS OF AN EARLY VISITOR**

Peter Kalm, the Swedish traveller who visited Trenton in 1748, noted conditions as he then observed them relative to the brisk traffic which passed through the town, and from which its inhabitants derived their livelihood. Though his observations were recorded some twenty-five years earlier than our period, the probabilities are that the circumstances had not altered much if any during the intervening years.

The inhabitants of the place carried on a small trade with the goods which they got from Philadelphia but their chief gain consists in the arrival of the numerous travellers between that city and New York, for they are commonly brought by Trenton yachts from Philadelphia to Trenton, or from thence to Philadelphia. But from Trenton further to New Brunswick, the travellers go in wagons which set out every day for that place. Several of the inhabitants, however, subsist on the carriage for all sorts of goods which are every day sent in great quantities either fro' Philadelphia to New York or from thence to the former place, for between Philadelphia and New York all goods go by water, but between Trenton and New Brunswick they are all carried by land, and both these convenience belong to people of this town. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America*, p. 220, trans. by T. R. Forster Warrington, 1770.

In the year 1774 Governor Franklin reported:

The tide in this river [Delaware] goes no higher than Trenton in New Jersey, which is about thirty miles above Philadelphia, where there is a rift or falls, passable however with flat bottomed boats which carry five or six hundred bushels of wheat. By these boats of which there are now a great number, the produce of both sides of the river for upwards of one hundred miles above Trenton are brought to Philadelphia. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *New Jersey Archives*, Vol. X, p. 438.

Though Burlington at this time was perhaps politically a more important place, since it had the prestige of being one of the two capitals of the Province, Perth Amboy being the other, Trenton, owing to its favorable situation, was far better known to the general public. Visitors of distinction often stopped here to break their journey.

John Adams, afterwards the second President of the United States, paid his first visit to Trenton in August 1774 and makes the following record in his diary:

Rode to Trenton [from Princeton] to breakfast at William's Tavern, the tavern at Trenton Ferry, we saw four very large black walnut trees standing in a row behind the house. The town of Trenton is a pretty village. It appears to be the largest town we have seen in the Jerseys.

Since 1719 Trenton had been the county seat of the large County of Hunterdon, and thus was a center for legal business, the place where the courts were held and lawyers congregated.

Recalling the conditions which prevailed in those early days, a writer of a later period thus described the circumstances under which the courts of that time assembled and transacted their business.

In the absence of railroads the common highway of these several distant seats of justice would be lined with wagons, gigs, sulkies, and public stages. Every lawyer kept his horse and sulky in those days, and their attendance upon the county courts involved the necessity of their remaining generally during the whole week, and it was so with jurors and witnesses. The public hotels were thronged with people during the whole term of court, day and night. The table set for the court and bar in those days, and previous years, makes an interesting chapter in the history of judges and lawyers who practised in the courts of the county. County counts in those years were very different from those of the present time. They were more expensive and inconvenient, and they were attended with more conviviality it may be, but they were more impressive upon the people of the country and diffused more knowledge of human rights and wrongs among the throngs who daily filled the courtroom than at the present day.

As the only substantial settlement in New Jersey south of New Brunswick, Trenton was also a market town serving a wide territory. We may think of Trenton, therefore, as being in those days a busy little place entertaining at its inns and taverns a constantly moving company of all sorts and conditions. Stage coaches and mails came and went regularly, vehicles and horsemen passed and repassed on their journey, merchants and officials, judges, lawyers, farmers and pedlers found lodgment here; and at their meals and in the evenings when they gathered in the public meeting rooms, interchanged information as to the conditions in their several localities and conversed and argued about politics and particularly the absorbing topic concerned with the controversy between the Colonies and the mother country. It was in such ways and on such occasions that public opinion was formed and men got to understand the sentiment cherished in different sections of the community, and thus when the issue was clarified and the time was ripe for action, had acquired a fairly clear notion of the attitude likely to be assumed by their neighbors and associates near and remote.

## THE FERRIES OVER THE DELAWARE

There were two or perhaps three ferries over the Delaware in close proximity to the town, - Trenton Ferry, at the foot of Ferry Street, and a ferry, known as “Beatty’s” with a landing somewhat west of the Calhoun Street Bridge. There was also a ferry about a mile down the river from Trenton Ferry known as the “New Ferry” which was conducted by Elijah Bond from his own property.

Besides the ferry near the foot of Calhoun’s Lane there were also several other ferries located at convenient points a few miles up the river of which Stryker mentions Howell’s, Yardley’s, Johnson’s, and McKonkey’s, the latter at what is now known as Washington Crossing. Thus it will be seen there were ample facilities for crossing the Delaware, rendering Trenton easy of access from points in Pennsylvania. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See “Ferries,” in Chap. V, below.



[MAP OF TRENTON ABOUT 1776](#)

## TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The accompanying map, facing page 104, shows the topographical features of the town and indicates the location of the churches and a few other buildings of historic interest.

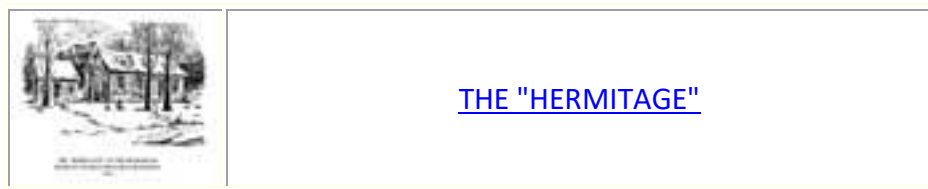
The names of the streets in Trenton as identified by Stryker in his pamphlet, *Trenton One Hundred Years Ago, 1776-1777*, then bore titles unfamiliar to us today. Thus State Street was Second; Warren, King; Broad, Queen; East Hanover, Third; Academy, Fourth. There was then no Perry Street, but Church Alley to the north of St. Michael’s Church ran between King and Queen, and Pinkerton’s Alley west of Queen, now a part of Hanover Street, did likewise. Front Street had then the same name. Second Street, our East and West State Street, was a short street running west only about as far as what is now Willow Street, thence giving access to the River Road, and East State Street extended not much further than what is now Montgomery Street, at one time known as “Quaker Lane,” thence passing into a lane bordering an apple orchard and leading to Samuel Henry’s iron works at the creek. What we know as South Warren Street then ended at Front Street. Pennington Avenue was Pennington Road. Brunswick Avenue, Brunswick Road, and Princeton Avenue was a mere lane leading to the Beakes’ estate. Calhoun Street was a country roadway connecting Beatty’s ferry with the Pennington road. The estate known as “Belleville” and occupied in turn by many distinguished families, was about at the junction of West State Street and Prospect. The “Hermitage,” afterwards the Atterbury estate, where General Philemon Dickinson lived, was then far out in the country on the River Road, as was also the Cadwalader property, and “Bloomsbury Court,” the mansion built by Colonel William Trent and recently known as “Woodlawn” on South Warren Street, was equally remote from the town and surrounded by farm land.

Stryker says:

The town above the creek may be considered as bounded by what we call today the creek, Montgomery Street, Perry and Willow; all outside was in the suburbs.

All the ground south of Front Street along the Assunpink Creek from the orchard to the river was called "Peace's Meadows" and was low and swampy. The land lying on each side of the road to Bordentown, south of the creek, was then called Littleboro, also Kingsbury, the farm west of that road, Bloomsbury and the village along the shore below Bloomsbury farm called Lamberton after Thomas Lambert [the first settler] .<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Stryker, pamphlet, *Trenton One Hundred Years Ago, 1776-1777*.



According to Stryker there were at that time in Trenton about one hundred houses in all (seventy above and thirty below the creek), most of them of wooden construction.

Peter Kalm, in his *Travels into North America* quoted above, alludes briefly to the appearance of the town as he noted it in 1748, and probably conditions had not altered materially twenty-five years later.

The houses are partly built of stone, though most of them are made of wood or planks, commonly two stories high, together with a cellar below the building, and a kitchen under ground, close to the cellar. The houses stand at a moderate distance from one another. They are commonly built so that the street passes along one side of the houses, while gardens of different dimensions bound the other side; in each garden is a draw-well.

Of buildings, public or semi-public, there were the barracks, built in 1758, the County Court House and jail built about 1730, the postoffice and the village school erected from the proceeds of a lottery held in 1753 which stood on Second Street where the First Presbyterian Church now stands, the original church built in 1726 being then located a little farther to the west nearer the old City Hall. Other churches were St. Michael's on King Street, built about 1748, the Quaker Meeting House on Third Street, built in 1739, and a small frame church belonging to the Methodists on the northeast corner of Fourth and Queen Streets, erected in 1773.

There was a stone bridge built by the County in 1766 arching the Assunpink at Queen Street. Mahlon Stacy's mill, originally built of hewn logs in 1679 but afterwards replaced by a two-story stone building when the property was bought by Colonel William Trent, was just beyond.

Over the river [Assunpink] in the compact part of the town is a spacious stone bridge, supported by arches built with stone and lime with a high wall on each side handsomely laid. At the foot of

the bridge are mills for grinding and bolting wheat. These mills are contained in a very large stone building and are remarkable for the prodigious quantity and excellent quality of the flour which is ground in them every twenty-four hours.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The Rev. Manasseh Cutler's description of Trenton (1787), in *Proceedings of New Jersey Historical Society*, 1873, p. 94.

## LOCAL INDUSTRIES

There were several manufacturing establishments, among which were Samuel Henry's iron works located beyond an apple orchard to the east of the town on the Assunpink, a steel works at the mouth of Pettit's Run belonging to Stacy Potts, where in 1776 he and John Fitch manufactured files, and Benjamin Yard's iron works where the new Masonic Temple now stands, where guns were made and general iron-working carried on. John Fitch, then a gunsmith, had a shop on King Street in the same building where James Wilson plied his trade as a silversmith. Fitch had a contract with the American army for repairing arms and making buttons. At one time he is said to have had sixty men in his employ. The shop was burned by the British in 1776. Stacy Potts had his extensive tannery in a yard reached by an alley above his home on King Street. The principal merchant of that day was Abraham Hunt who carried on a thriving business in general merchandise at the corner of King and Second Streets where his house stood. Hunt was postmaster both before and after the war. When Franklin was postmaster-general his records show that in 1776 the post-office at Trenton yielded a revenue of £10 16s. 11d.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, 1862, Vol. IX, pp. 83-5.



[THE POSTOFFICE ABOUT 1776](#)

## SOCIAL LIFE

Of the social life of the inhabitants little of a definite nature is known, but it must have been similar to that in other towns of the same size and general character. Probably most of the social events were held in the chief taverns where also public meetings assembled, and where the beaux and belles of that day congregated for balls and routs.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See "Taverns," in Chap. VI, below.

Possibly some of the more sedate affairs were associated with the two churches, St. Michael's and the Presbyterian. The relations between the two congregations were cordial in the extreme. There seems at times to have been a rotation of services and members of each had pews in both churches, so that when one or the other church was without a settled minister, all would attend that in which a service was provided. Also some of the respective vestrymen and trustees often served on both boards at different times or even simultaneously. The two congregations united in a lottery in 1773 for the purpose of raising funds to be divided between them.

An interesting side-light on the hospitality of the day is afforded by the record made by John Adams in his diary under date September 19, 1777:

We rode to Trenton where we dined, drank tea with Mrs. Spencer [probably the wife of the Rev. Elihu .Spencer, pastor of the Presbyterian Church] ; lodged at S. Tucker's at his kind invitation.

The next day he records:

20th, breakfasted at Mrs. J. B. Smith's. The old gentleman, his son Thomas, the war officer, were there, and Mrs. Smith's little son and two daughters. An elegant breakfast we had, of fine Hyson, loaf-sugar, and coffee, etc. Dined at William's at the sign of the Green Tree; drank tea with Mr. Thompson and his lady at Mrs. Jackson's; walked with Mr. Duane [James Duane] to General Dickinson's house and looked at his farm and gardens, and his green-house, which is a scene of desolation; the floor of the green-house is dug up by the Hessians in search of money. Slept again at Tuckers.

### **SOME CITIZENS OF THE TOWN IN 1776**

Of the inhabitants of Trenton at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War several are well known to us from their prominence in public affairs and others can be identified from various sources. If there were then in Trenton one hundred households probably the number of adult males living in the town was about the same and at least a score of these have left memories behind them other than their mere names.

The writer has gleaned from various sources a fairly comprehensive list representing the various professions and occupations of those living in Trenton during the Revolutionary era. Of course the list is not exhaustive, but it includes about sixty names or over one-half of the presumptive one hundred adult males living in or near Trenton at that time.

Of lawyers or those who held judicial and other official positions there were Isaac Allen, John Allen, probably his brother, a deputy from Hunterdon County to the Provincial Assembly of 1776, John Barnes, high sheriff, David Brearley, Abraham Cottnam and his son Warrell Cottnam, Ebenezer Cowell, Daniel Coxe, Isaac De Cow, Robert Lettis Hooper, father and son, Michajah How, William Pidgeon, and Samuel Tucker, president of the Provincial Assembly and subsequently justice of the Supreme Court and for a time treasurer of the State.

Of merchants and tradesmen there were Abraham Hunt, also postmaster, and Moore Furman who likewise held the same office in 1757, James Emerson, Alexander Calhoun, Daniel Pinkerton, John Singer, Job Moore, Robert Singer, and Joseph Milnor. William Tucker was a shoemaker, John Rickey was a dealer in hardware, James Burnside was a school teacher and bookseller, Joshua Newbold, Aaron and Hezekiah Howell, and Joseph and Samuel Lanning were blacksmiths. Richard Howell was a cooper, Matthew Clunn was a tinsmith, Benjamin Smith was a harness-maker, James Wilson was a silversmith, Conrad Kotts was a tailor, Thomas Barnes and Hugh Runyon were druggists. William Yard and Godfrey Winer were bakers, Charles Axford was a carpenter. Alexander Chambers, Sr., was a turner and chairmaker. Physicians were David Cowell, Isaac Smith and William Bryant. Benjamin Yard and Samuel Henry were iron

manufacturers. Stacy Potts was a steel manufacturer and also a tanner, Elijah Bond was a ferry owner, auctioneer and dealer in real estate, Rensselaer Williams, Thomas Janney, William Cain and Jonathan Richmond were innkeepers and also, though at a somewhat later date, were Francis Witt, Henry Drake and Jacob G. Bergen. Philemon Dickinson was the owner of an estate known as the "Hermitage" on the River Road purchased in 1776 subsequent to the Declaration of Independence. Lambert Cadwalader bought a property in March 1776 on the River Road, but did not make his home there until November 1776, when he was a paroled prisoner of war until 1779. Major William Trent was living in Trenton before the war and probably remained during that period, for his estate in Lambertton was not offered for sale until 1784. Samuel Meredith had an estate known as "Otter Hall" on the river two miles below Trenton which he was occupying in 1770, but he was not living here during the war period though he subsequently returned to take up his residence. Dr. William Bryant was living temporarily during the war at "Bloomsbury Court," Colonel William Trent's former home. Nathan Beakes, who had married Mary, a daughter of Major William Trent, lived on his plantation north of the town. There were two clergymen then living in Trenton, the Rev. Elihu Spencer, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. George Panton, rector of St. Michael's.

Among the names mentioned above were certain leading men who gave the place its character and were prominent in various lines of patriotic activity, political and military. There were also some who were conspicuous as convinced loyalists, and others who may be reckoned as waverers. Brief biographical sketches of some of these will be given in subsequent pages.

## *II. General Political Conditions in New Jersey*

BEFORE proceeding to consider local political sentiment it will be helpful to offer some brief observations upon the complicated political conditions as they existed in the Colony of New Jersey at the outbreak of the war.

It had been plainly evident to thinking men for several years preceding actual hostilities that the Colonies were gradually drifting away from the mother country, and it was only a question of time when a crisis would be reached, unless the British government should greatly modify its policy and meet the wishes of the people for a larger share of independence.

The progressive nature of the revolutionary movement in New Jersey may be studied in the proceedings of the Provincial Congress beginning with the session held in New Brunswick in February 1774 and culminating in the session held in Burlington in the summer of 1776, during which, on July 2, the decisive step was taken of declaring the independence of the Colony from British rule. Inclusive of these two sessions seven separate sessions of the Congress were held in all within the two-year period. Each session went a little farther than the one preceding it towards weakening the bonds which bound the Colony to the mother country. Professing the utmost loyalty to the King and ever reiterating the desire and intention of the people of New Jersey to remain his faithful subjects, there went hand in hand with this assertion a bitter protest against



the measures taken by the British government to control the destinies of the Colonies and an implied threat to resist those measures by force.

As an example of the formal acknowledgment of the King's sovereignty, the following resolution adopted unanimously at a meeting of the freeholders and inhabitants of Hunterdon County held July 8, 1774, with Samuel Tucker in the chair, may be cited:

We do most expressly declare, recognize and acknowledge His Majesty, King George the Third to be the lawful and rightful King of Great Britain and of all his other Dominions, and that it is the indispensable duty of this Colony, under the enjoyment of our constitutional privileges and immunities, as being a part of His Majesty's Dominions, always to bear faithful and true allegiance to His Majesty, and Him to defend to the utmost of our power against all attempts upon his person, crown, and dignity. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Snell, *History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties*, p. 27.

The same general sentiments were expressed by meetings held in other counties.

A lip service was thus rendered to the person of the sovereign but at the same time resolutions were passed and actions taken that were plainly contumacious, subversive of his authority and even treasonable as the word is commonly interpreted. The royal governor was ignored and flouted, and a rival government was set up under the old legal forms. Provision was made for raising and equipping a militia to be used presumably against His Majesty's forces and also for recruiting troops to be placed at the disposal of the Continental Congress for the same purpose. Taxes were levied to support the military establishment and for other objects designated by the Congress. A Committee of Safety was appointed which wielded extraordinary powers of inquisition and punishment. In other words the whole machinery of a dual government was brought into existence and used to nullify and supersede the then legally established order.

The declaration of the Colony's independence made July 2, 1776, was merely a formal announcement of what had already notoriously taken place or had been in process of accomplishment for several years.

## **THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS**

Of the seven sessions of the Provincial Congress three were held in Trenton, May, August and October 1775, and the seventh session held in June 1776 was adjourned from Burlington and met in Trenton from July 5 for fourteen days.

Hunterdon County and Trenton men took an active part in the preliminary agitation and also served on the first General Committee of Correspondence appointed by the Provincial Assembly, July 21, 1774. These included Samuel Tucker, Dr. Isaac Smith, Charles Coxe, Benjamin Brearley, Abraham Hunt, Alexander Chambers, Isaac Pearson and John Allen. On the first Committee of Safety appointed in October 1775 were Samuel Tucker and Isaac Pearson. Samuel Tucker was president of the Provincial Congress of 1775 and also 1776.

The Provincial Congress of New Jersey which met in Burlington early in June 1776 with Samuel Tucker of Trenton as its president, after arresting and imprisoning the royal governor, William Franklin, had embodied in the preamble to the constitution, adopted July 2, the following pronouncement: "All Civil authority under him [George III] is necessarily at an end, and a dissolution of government in each Colony has consequently taken place." A few days later it became known that the united Colonies through their representatives at Philadelphia had passed the Declaration of Independence, which document was read July 8 from the steps of the Court House in Trenton where the Provincial Congress was then sitting, having adjourned thither from Burlington on July 5. Tradition says that the document was read at noon simultaneously with its proclamation in Philadelphia and adjacent towns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, in the presence of the members of the Congress by Samuel Tucker, the president.

It was plain that the time had now arrived when men had to make the momentous choice whether they would continue to remain loyal subjects of King George or cast in their fortune with the new order.

A judicious historian thus sums up the situation:

The opening of the Revolution found New Jersey's sentiment unevenly crystallized. Few, if any, were favoring absolute independence. There were three elements. One, the Tory party, was led by Governor William Franklin, the illegitimate son of Benjamin Franklin. This conservative class embraced nearly all the Episcopalians, a vast proportion of the noncombatant members of the Society of Friends and some East Jersey Calvinists. Another element was composed of men of various shades of belief, some in favor of continual protest, others desirous of compromise. This included at the outbreak of the struggle most of the Calvinists, some few Quakers of the younger generation, and the Scotch-Irish. The third party drew its support from a few bold, aggressive spirits of influence whose following included men who believed that war for independence would benefit their fortunes. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "Outline History of New Jersey" in *Legislative Manual*, 1918.

## **A CONFUSED ISSUE**

It is evident that the prevailing public attitude in New Jersey as elsewhere was one of hesitancy, and even many of those who had been leaders in demanding concessions from the British government were not yet certain in their own minds whether they desired to take the irrevocable step of seceding and putting the issue to the arbitrament of war.

The military forces under the command of the British authorities were strong and supposedly efficient and moreover represented the principle of an established order, while the troops of the revolting Colonies were correspondingly weak and rested under the stigma of being rebels. It is no wonder therefore that a large minority should have experienced some difficulty in deciding what their personal attitude should be. The mind of the plain people was confused as to the merits of the issue and unable to read clearly the signs of the times. All they knew was that whichever side they favored, the other side, if and when it got the ascendancy, would be sure to visit waverers with severe reprisals and penalties.

## DUAL PRONOUNCEMENTS

Pronouncements were made by both authorities seeking to secure adherents to the side they respectively represented and threatening the direst consequences to any who should aid or abet their enemies.

On July 15, 1776, at a meeting of the Provincial Congress (afterwards given the title “Convention of the State of New Jersey”) held in Trenton, a resolution was passed providing that no person elected to a seat in the Council or Assembly should be entitled to take his seat until he had subscribed to the following oath:

I, A. B., do swear (or affirm) that I do not hold myself bound to bear allegiance to George the Third, King of Great Britain; that I will not by any means directly or indirectly oppose the measures adopted by this Colony, or the Continental Congress, against the tyranny attempted to be established over these Colonies by the Court of Great Britain; and that I do and will bear true allegiance to the government established in this Province under the authority of the people.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of New Jersey, 1776.*

On July 18 the Convention put forth an ordinance for punishing treason, meaning thereby treason to the patriotic side.

Whereas it is necessary in these times of danger, that crimes should receive their due punishment; and the safety of the people more especially requires, that all persons, who shall be found so wicked as to desire the destruction of good government, or to aid and assist the avowed enemies of the State, be punished with death.

Therefore be it resolved and ordained by this Convention and it is resolved and ordained by the authority of the same, that all persons abiding within this State of New Jersey and deriving protection from the laws thereof do owe allegiance to the Government of this State as of late established on the authority of the people and are deemed as members of this State.

And that all and every persons who from and after the date hereof shall levy war against this State within the same, or be adherent to the King of Great Britain or others the enemies of this State within the same, or to the enemies of the United States of North America, giving to him or them aid or comfort, shall be adjudged guilty of high treason and suffer the pains and penalties thereof, in like manner, as by the ancient laws of this State, he or they should have suffered in cases of high treason.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *Proceedings of the Convention of New Jersey, 1776.*

When the British army entered New Jersey in November 1776, General Howe under instruction from the home government offered a free pardon to all who should have taken up arms against the British and issued protection papers to such and others as were willing to accept the same and take the oath of allegiance. It is said that 2700 persons in New Jersey took advantage of the offer, and thus ostensibly at least ranged themselves on the loyalist side and against the patriotic.

The following is the substance of the proclamation issued under date November 30, 1776, by the Howes, Richard and William, “the King’s Commissioners for restoring peace in his Majesty’s Colonies and Plantations in North America” whereby “all persons speedily returning to their just allegiance were promised a free and general pardon,” etc.:

We do hereby declare and make known to all men that every person who within sixty days from the day of the date hereof shall appear before . . . and shall claim the benefit of this Proclamation and at the same time testify his obedience to the laws by subscribing a declaration of the words following

“I, A. B., do promise and declare that I will remain in a peaceable obedience to his Majesty, and will not take up arms, nor encourage others to take up arms in opposition to his authority,” shall and may obtain a full and free pardon of all treasons and misprisions of treasons, by him heretofore committed or done, and of all forfeitures, attainders and penalties for the same: and upon producing to us, or to either of us, a certificate of such his appearance and declaration, shall and may have and receive such pardon made and passed to him in due form. Given at New York this thirtieth day of November, 1776.

By Command of their Excellencies  
HENRY STRACHEY

HOWE  
W. HOWE

Confronted by these two pronouncements, American and British, of similar intent, each demanding fealty to a separate sovereignty under a threat implied or specific that recusants would be subject to the penalties of treason, the people of New Jersey were in a perilous position.

### **A COMPROMISE ANTICIPATED**

At the beginning of the struggle and for some time subsequently most perhaps were doubtful as to the issue and probably inclined to believe that there would in the end be a compromise which would leave things very much as they had been.

### **THE NEED FOR PRUDENCE AND CAUTION**

The inhabitants of New Jersey, to whatever side their personal sentiments may have inclined, owing to the exposed position in which they were placed in the direct route between the two opposing forces, with New York held by the British and Philadelphia by the patriots, must have felt the need of exercising the utmost prudence and caution in the presence of the dual danger which confronted them. As the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed, as now the Continentals were in the ascendancy in the district, and now the British, many of the inhabitants would incline, as the occasion demanded, to hurrah with the patriots or to profess loyalty to the government of King George. Of course this was not an heroic attitude, but it is one perfectly natural for those confronted by an immediate contingency, and the common custom everywhere of those impaled on the horns of such a dilemma. Thus many, when an involuntary decision was forced upon them, swore allegiance alternately to both sides.

## BRITISH “PROTECTION”

It would appear that this wavering, this running with the hounds and doubling with the hares, was not popularly regarded as a grave moral delinquency by those who secretly favored the American cause, but rather as a justifiable expedient, dictated by a natural regard for the preservation of life and property. Moreover since the Hessians, and even the British soldiers, were disposed to disregard these protection papers and indiscriminately pillaged in the case of loyalists and patriots alike, those who held British protection papers may have felt themselves morally absolved from their oaths as the corresponding terms were not observed.

The conduct of the British in New Jersey tended in a great degree to excite and confirm opposition. The peaceful and unresisting were plundered and abused and the most wanton and cruel injuries were inflicted, and with a strange disregard for good policy as well as good faith, no favor was shown even to those who had received written protection from the British. “The Hessians,” says Gordon, “would not understand and the British soldiers deemed it a foul disgrace that the Hessians should be the only plunderers.” Universal indignation was thus aroused.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Mulford, *History of New Jersey*, p. 440.

Certainly in many cases where persons took protection from the British but actually did not bear arms against their countrymen, the offense was often condoned and was not subsequently regarded as any bar to citizenship when the American government was finally established. Thus Samuel Tucker of Trenton, although he had previously been the president of the Provincial Congress and also held other high offices, yet took protection, in December 1776, from the British, in order, as he claimed, to safeguard public funds in his possession as well as his own personal property. Nor did he find that this temporary defection operated in the popular mind much to his discredit, though it entailed the immediate forfeiture of his membership in the Assembly and his removal from the office of justice of the Supreme Court. Nevertheless, subsequently having taken the oath of allegiance, Tucker was again elected to the State Legislature and served 1782-84.

## EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

But if the taking of British protection, unlike the refusal to take the oath of patriotic allegiance when officially called upon to do so, was regarded under certain extenuating circumstances as not too heinous an offense there were yet conspicuous examples of those on both sides who from the very outset disdained to compromise their principles and suffered accordingly. But if many others who compromised or wavered in their stand for the patriotic side were like the inhabitants of Meroz in Old Testament history in that “they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty,” we who live in calmer days and are not likely to be confronted by such a crisis as were they, have small reason to reproach them with their failure to act a more heroic part. When it is a question of being shot as a traitor, or imprisoned and despoiled of all your worldly goods, a discriminating prudence rather than a heedless valor is a virtue likely to commend itself to the average person.

The following is the official text of the “protection” papers issued in accordance with the proclamation put forth by the brothers Howe in November 1776:

I do hereby certify that the bearer came and subscribed this the declaration specified in a certain proclamation published at New York on the thirtieth day of November last, by the Right Honorable Lord Howe and His Excellency General Howe. Whereby he is entitled to the protection of all officers and soldiers serving in His Majesty’s Army in America, both for himself, his family and property, and to pass and repass on his lawful business without molestation.

Signed (Name of British Officer issuing the above)

### ***III. Loyalist Sentiment in Trenton***

THAT Hunterdon County which included Trenton was regarded as a prime center of disaffection to the patriotic cause may be inferred from a letter written by Governor Livingston from Princeton under date October 4, 1777, to John Hancock, the president of Congress. The letter embodied a protest against sending prominent Tories to Hunterdon County as prisoners on parole under surveillance by order of the Continental authorities and praying that they might be sent elsewhere. The particular incident referred to was concerned with John Penn, late the royal governor of Pennsylvania, and Benjamin Chew, late chief justice, and others who had been sent to “Union,” an iron works located in what was afterwards Union Township in Hunterdon County. The letter goes on to say:

Of all Jersey the spot in which they are at present is the very spot in which they ought not to be. It has always been considerably disaffected and still continues so notwithstanding all our efforts, owing, we imagine, in part to the interests, connections and influence of Mr. John Allen, brother-in-law of Mr. Penn, who is now with the enemy.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *New Jersey Revolutionary Correspondence*, pp. 101, 102.

The John Allen mentioned above was probably a son of John Allen, an associate justice of the Supreme Court, and a brother of Colonel Isaac Allen of Trenton, a well-known loyalist. John Allen himself had been a deputy from Hunterdon County to the Provincial Congress of 1776 against whom complaints were filed by the Trenton Committee early in the session and who had retired or been compelled to resign his seat, as the result of the charges proved against him. He was the owner of the Union Iron Works.

During the occupation of Trenton by the Hessians in December 1776, the attitude of the inhabitants if not favorable to the British was certainly not one of enthusiastic support of the patriotic cause.

A few days before the surprise attack on Trenton Washington was anxious to obtain accurate information as to the actual conditions which obtained there. He accordingly requested General Philemon Dickinson, as a resident of the place and therefore presumably familiar with responsible persons likely to undertake such an expedition, to find some one to go to Trenton and gather the information he needed. The following is General Dickinson's report on the subject: <sup>14</sup>

Yardley's Farms, 21 December, 1776.

Sir:

. . . I have endeavoured to prevail with some intelligent person to go down into Trenton, but hitherto without success. If 'tis agreeable to your Excellency, I will offer fifteen or twenty dollars to a good hand, who will undertake it, if such a one can be found. People here are extremely fearful of the *inhabitants at Trenton betraying them*.

PHILEMON DICKINSON

His Excellency Gen. Washington.

<sup>14</sup> *American Archives*, 5th .Ser., Vol. III, 1343-4.

Probably many in Trenton had a strong suspicion lest their devotion to the patriotic cause might be questioned owing perhaps to their too friendly association with the Hessians and British during the occupancy of the town in December 1776.

In a letter of Lieutenant Colonel Tench Tilghman, aide-de-camp to General Washington, written to his father, James Tilghman of Philadelphia, from the headquarters of the American army, Newtown, Pa., dated December 27, 1776, he says:

"The Hessians have laid all waste since the British troops went away, *the inhabitants had left the Town* and their houses were stripped and torn to pieces."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Correspondence of Tench Tilghman*, Library of Congress, E207-757T5.

If, as this passage seems to indicate, the inhabitants or many of them had fled the town, following its occupancy by the Hessians, it would seem that they did so to avoid compromising themselves. As it was, not a few sought and obtained "protection" from the enemy.

### **SOME LOCAL PROTECTION PAPERS**

The originals of some of the British protection papers issued under General Howe's proclamation of November 1776, and involving Trenton persons, were discovered some twenty years ago by Dr. Carlos E. Godfrey in the Library of the Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Mass. In a recent communication to the writer, in which he certifies as to the authenticity of the copies made of them at the time, Dr. Godfrey calls attention to the fact that the "name General 'Harries' mentioned in some of them unquestionably refers to General Howe." These protection papers,

which are probably only a moiety of those issued, bear the names of some fourteen inhabitants of Trenton who sought and obtained British protection. The papers are signed and countersigned by English or Hessian officers under dates running from November 30, 1776, to February 22, 1777. The names inscribed are Archibald William Yard, Marmaduke Watson, John Stevens, Andrew Mershon, Elijah Lanning, Daniel Hutchinson, Timothy Howell, William Harcourt, John Cubberly, Moses Clayton, Samuel Hill, John Cox, Thomas Cox and Benjamin Arrenson.

A specimen may be given:

Tis His Excellency General Harries [Howe] express orders that no person presume on any account to molest or injure Elijah Lanning in his person or property.

By order of his Excellency

Headquarters Dec. 13, 1776

HENRY KNIGHT

Von Munchausen

Aid de Camp

Adjutant

(endorsed) Elijah Lanning

Sworn Feb. 21, 1777.

The spelling and wording of many of these papers would indicate that they were made out by Hessian officers, who were notoriously deficient in knowledge of the English language.

The following is an example of the certification of the oath taken:

I do certify that the Bearer Archbd Wm. Yard has taken the oath agreeable to the proclamation of the 20th Nov. 1776.

JAMES GRANT, M. Genl.

(Endorsed) Archbd Wm. Yard

Sworn Feb. 22, 1777

None of these names above appears in the official list of loyalists of New Jersey printed in the *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. X, published 1926-27. It would seem probable, therefore, that the persons mentioned subsequently purged themselves of their offense and took the oath of American allegiance.

Trenton as the quasi-seat of government, where the Provincial Congress held many of its sessions, was certainly in the very thick of the trouble. Officeholders of the County and the Province lived here or frequently visited here. Feeling ran high on both sides. There was a Tory



element which, if it was not numerous, was wealthy and influential and included men like Isaac Allen, John Barnes, Daniel Coxe and Samuel Henry. That men of property having a substantial stake in the prosperity of the country and bound to the old order from sentiments of loyalty and self-interest should hesitate to cast in their lot with the patriotic party will not seem strange. Particularly would this be the case with those who held office under the British government, for in addition to imperilling their lives and fortunes, they would also be in the position of violating the solemn oath which they had taken faithfully to serve the interests of the British Crown.

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND LOYALISTS

Others who were devoted members of the Church of England would likewise hesitate to take an open stand against the British government to which they were also attached by conviction and perhaps had near relatives in the old country who would regard their political defection as tantamount to a repudiation of their religious belief, so close were the relations between Church and State in those days. The Church of England clergy in the Colony were loyalists to a man and almost necessarily so since all had received their orders from the hierarchy of the English Church, and as a condition of their ordination, had taken an oath of the King's supremacy and, moreover, had promised conformity to the doctrines, discipline and worship of the English Church as set forth in the Ecclesiastical Canons and the Book of Common Prayer. To depart from these would have been, in the judgment of most, to break their solemn vows.

A letter of the Rev. Jonathan Odell, rector of St. Mary's Church, Burlington, to the secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel under date January 25, 1777, may be taken as representative of the general attitude of the clergy in New Jersey and elsewhere:

Since the declaration of Independency the alternative has been either to make such alterations in the Liturgy as both honour and conscience must be alarmed at, or else to shut up our Churches and discontinue our attendance on public Worship. It was impossible for me to hesitate a moment in such a case, and I find that many of the Clergy in Pennsylvania and everyone in New Jersey (Mr. Blackwell only excepted) have thought it their indispensable duty in this perplexing situation to suspend our public Ministrations rather than make any alterations in the established Liturgy . . . .<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Hills, *History of Church in Burlington*, p. 317.

Several of the clergy, including the Rev. George Panton, then rector of St. Michael's Church, Trenton, and the Rev. Jonathan Odell of Burlington mentioned above, took an aggressive part on the loyalist side carrying on an active propaganda in favor of the existing order. The Rev. William Frazer of Amwell (Ringo's), who after the war became the rector of St. Michael's Church, 1787-95, appears to have adopted a pacific attitude and in some measure continued his ministrations during the war period. But this did not relieve him of suspicion, and his life was made unendurable by repeated searches of his home, by outrages upon his person and pillage of his property by the Continental troopers.

In February 1777 it was reported:

At the time of this writing a party of 50 men from Washington's army surrounded his house and fired upon the out sentry of the Hessians. In 1778-79 the record is made: Mr. Frazer has been stripped of almost all he possessed by the rebel army, and being too low in circumstances to remove is forced to submit to daily insults and threatenings. <sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Parker, *Historical Sketches*, p. 112.

Mr. Frazer writes (no date)

While the English Army was in this Province my house was almost every night search'd for persons whom I had never seen, the Bayonet presented to my Breast, and my Family more than once, Robbed of Clothing and other necessaries; besides terrifying in the most cruel manner the dear Companion of my Life and Several small children. <sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine*, Vol. XII, p. 221.

The following is the official record:

August 8, 1777. The State vs. The Revd William Frazer Sur Recognizance for refusing the Test. Entered into Recognizance in the sum of 100 pounds & Corns Williamson his Surety in the sum of 50 pounds for his appearance at next court.

February 4, 1778. The State vs. Revd William Frazer. The defendant still refusing to take the test - ordered to be fined 20 pounds & Process in 2 months.

As with the clergy so in general it may be said that the laity of the Established Church were favorable to the existing order though there were many notable exceptions in Trenton as elsewhere.

## **THE VESTRY OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH**

With the vestry of St. Michael's Church the sentiment was a mixed one. Perhaps there was an almost equal division between the members. It is evident, however, all felt that in the excited state of public opinion it would be imprudent to attempt to maintain services and accordingly the church was closed by a resolution of the body. This action was significantly taken at a meeting held Sunday, July 7, 1776, five days after the State Convention had declared the independence of the Province from English sovereignty and the day before the Declaration of Independence was publicly proclaimed from the steps of the Court House. The resolution, which follows, gives the reason for the determination to close the church. Though set forth in guarded terms, it is possible to read between the lines and recognize a note of protest and bewilderment.

At a meeting of the Rector, wardens and vestry of St. Michael's Church held on Sunday the 7th day of July, Anno Dom. 1776.

The Rector, church wardens and vestry of St. Michael's Church in Trenton, deeply affected with the situation of Public Affairs, by which, among other unhappy Circumstances, the Public Home

of Worship of a Church of the most Catholic & Benevolent Principles has become incompatible with the safety of the Person of the Rector & Members of the Church, and the Exercise of it may thereby be attended with Inconveniences which for the Peace of the Church & society they wish to avoid. And as no alteration therein can take place, but by a Particular Authority competent only for that purpose. In order therefore to avoid the Inconveniences aforesd, the Rector, Church wardens & vestry agree to a Temporary Suspension of Public Worship ‘till God in his Providence shall so order that it can be performed agreeably to the Principles & Constitution of the Church . 19

19 Schuyler, *History of St. Michael's Church, Trenton*, p. 75.

The “alteration” referred to concerned the obligation to include the “Prayer for the King” as set forth in the liturgy.

The vestry elected at the Easter meeting for the year 1776 were the following as set down in the Minutes, April 6, 1776:

*Wardens:* Mr. [Isaac] Allen and Mr. [Elijah] Bond.

*Vestrymen*

Mr. [Robert Lettis] Hooper

Mr. [Michajah] How

Mr. J. Pearson

Mr. Carr

Mr. [John] Barnes

Mr. R. Pearson

*Vestrymen*

Mr. [Daniel] Coxe

Mr. [William] Pidgeon

Mr. Taylor

Mr. [Charles] Harrison

Mr. Collins

Mr. [James] Emerson

Of this vestry holding office in 1776, Isaac Allen, a warden, John Barnes, Daniel Coxe, and Charles Harrison were staunch loyalists and almost immediately following the Declaration of Independence threw in their lot with the fortunes of the British government. Other possible loyalists in the vestry were Carr, Taylor and Collins. As no given name in these cases is inscribed upon the church records it is impossible to be certain as to their affiliations. There was an Alexander Carr, Jr., of Hunterdon County, who is known to have been a loyalist, also an Edward Taylor who was imprisoned as a spy. These may have been identical with the vestrymen. Of Collins there is no record. Of the two Pearsons, one may have been “Justice” Pearson with whom the rector the Rev. George Panton lodged and who was killed in the surprise attack upon the town on December 26. Of the other members of the vestry all are known and several of them again served on the vestry when the church was reopened after the war. Doubtless all these favored the patriotic party as there is no record of their disaffection, and in the case of Robert Lettis Hooper, Michajah How, Elijah Bond and James Emerson, their services were conspicuous to the American cause. The careers of the loyalists are duly detailed on later pages, below.

## THE SENTIMENT OF OTHER BODIES

The Episcopalians and the Presbyterians together included the leading families of the town. Of the Presbyterians it is probable that most adhered to the patriotic party though it is known that several took British protection papers. These include Samuel Tucker, who was a trustee and for many years clerk of the board, Samuel Hill and Archibald William Yard, son of Joseph Yard, a trustee.

The Reverend Elihu Spencer, at that time pastor of the Presbyterian Church, was particularly obnoxious to the British government, because at the instance of Congress he had carried on a mission of propaganda in favor of independence in remote parts of the South for which contumacious conduct a reward of a hundred guineas had been placed on his head as a rebel. Receiving timely warning that the British army was about to enter Trenton, he fled to Delaware and suffered the loss of his furniture and other personal effects during the occupation of the town.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church*, 2nd ed., pp. 161-2.

There was a sprinkling of Methodists of whom John Fitch then living in Trenton was a conspicuous member, though afterwards he was expelled from the Society on the charge that he worked on Sunday, presumably at his trade as gunmaker in repairing arms for the Continental soldiers. There was also a substantial contingent of Quakers who were by conviction men of peace, though there were conspicuous individuals among them who when hostilities began did not scruple to take a prominent part on the patriotic side even in some instances to the extent of bearing arms. Stacy Potts, whatever may have been his personal convictions, and they were doubtless favorable to the patriotic cause, is recorded as refusing the oath of patriotic allegiance and was fined one hundred pounds.

Probably as a Quaker, Potts' principles would not permit him to take the oath. Doubtless his sentiments were well known and his apparent toryism did him no harm in the public esteem, since he continued to reside in Trenton and subsequently became mayor of the town.

## LOYALISTS OF HUNTERDON COUNTY

In the *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. X, 1926-27, are listed the names of known loyalists within the State, such being derived from the official records here and in England. The total number of names given is 1727, but these by no means include all the loyalists, since the records are absent or incomplete for several of the counties. For Hunterdon County the list, in some instances with short biographical sketches, contains sixty-nine names, including such prominent persons as Isaac Allen, John Barnes, Daniel Coxe, Charles Harrison, Samuel Henry, the Rev. George Panton, "Justice" Pearson, Mary Poynton, wife of Major Brereton Poynton of the English army, Major Walter Rutherford of "Edgerston" in Union Township, Joseph Taylor, an attorney of Trenton, John Allen, a deputy from Hunterdon County to the Provincial Congress of 1776, Dr. William Bryant, John Tabor Kempe and wife Grace (daughter of Daniel Coxe), Stacy Potts, and Samuel Tucker.

The offenses of these and others range from the acceptance of protection from the British or a refusal to take the oath of “Abjuration and Allegiance” up to the supreme crime of bearing arms against the Continentals. The charge against each is stated with reference to the official records. The penalties range from fine and temporary imprisonment to the confiscation of property and the execution of the accused. The compiler of this volume says: “As hundreds of persons were cited to appear [before the Committee of Safety] and take oaths of allegiance to the American government and did so, their names are omitted unless they later proved to have transferred their allegiance to the British. When they refused allegiance to the United States, this fact alone proved them to be loyalists.”

#### ***IV. The Trenton Militia Regiment***

THAT the patriots of Hunterdon County did their full military duty both in the Continental army and locally, the records amply show.

Besides the contingent serving in the Continental army, four militia regiments were provided from this County of which the First Regiment, under the command of Colonel Isaac Smith, included most of those from Trenton who were mustered into the State service. In addition to regular military service the local militia was used for police duty, the apprehension of deserters, the arrest of loyalists and disaffected persons, and in general for the suppression of disorder within the County and State.

Some of the officers and men in the First Regiment who bore familiar Trenton names may be mentioned: Colonel Isaac Smith, Lieutenant Colonel Abraham Hunt, First Major Joseph Brearley, Second Major Isaac DeCou, Captain Benjamin Van Cleve, Second Major Henry Phillips, Adjutant Elias Phillips, Captain William Tucker, Ensign Joseph Clunn, Captain Charles Harrison who resigned in 1776 to join the loyalists, Captain John Hunt, Lieutenant Isaac Yard, First Lieutenant John Fitch, Second Lieutenants Ellet Howell, Elias Hunt, and Ralph Lanning, Ensigns Eli Moore, John Mashatt and Samuel Beakes, Among the non-commissioned officers there were Sergeants William and Henry Chambers, Corporal David Hunt, Musicians Charles Axford, William Morris and William Smith. <sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Stryker, *Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*.

Miss Mabel W. Howell of Trenton has compiled <sup>22</sup> (1927) a list of sixty Revolutionary soldiers whose graves she has identified in Trenton and vicinity; also a list of sixty-three officers and men belonging to Trenton who served in the War of the Revolution.

<sup>22</sup> MS. on file in the State Library.

## AN APPEAL TO THE MILITIA

As a choice example of the rhetorical appeals to patriotic sentiment characteristic of the times, the following address to the militia of the State by the New Jersey Assembly, August 11, 1776, may be cited:

On you, our friends and brethren, it depends this day to determine whether you, your wives, your children and millions of your descendants yet unborn shall wear the galling, the ignominious yoke of slavery; or nobly inherit the generous inestimable blessings of freedom. The alternative is before you - can you hesitate in your choice? Can you doubt which you prefer? Say, will you be slaves? Will you toil and labor and glean together a little property, merely that it may be at the disposal of a relentless and rapacious conqueror? Will you of choice be hewers of wood and drawers of water? Impossible ! You cannot be so amazingly degenerate as to lick the hand that is raised to shed your blood! - Nature and nature's God have made you free! - Liberty is the birthright of Americans! the gift of heaven! and the instant that it is forced from you, you take leave of everything valuable on earth! - Your happiness or misery, virtuous independence or indignant servitude hang trembling in the balance! - Happily we know we can anticipate your virtuous choice. With confident satisfaction we are assured that not a moment will delay your important decision - that you cannot feel hesitation, whether you will tamely and degenerately bend your necks to the irretrievable wretchedness of slavery or by your instant and animated exertions enjoy the fair inheritance of heaven-born freedom and transmit it unimpaired to your posterity.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Proceedings of the Provincial Congress, 1776.*

### *V. Prominent Trenton Patriots and Loyalists*

FOR a small town Trenton certainly numbered among its inhabitants during the Revolutionary era more than its full share of distinguished men, both of those who rendered conspicuous services to the cause of American independence and of those likewise who remained firm in their loyalty to the British Crown. Of the patriots there is no need to magnify their character and achievements, since they have always received a full meed of praise from their admiring and grateful countrymen. Of the loyalists, beyond their mere names, little definite hitherto has been known by the public and the consequence is that all such have commonly been classed under the general category of "Tories" and contemptuously dismissed as unworthy of remembrance and respect.

The writers of our American history books, especially the earlier ones, in dealing with the War of the Revolution, show a disposition to magnify unduly the characters of those who espoused the cause of the patriots, and to belittle and disparage those who adhered to the mother country. Certainly the loyalists in our histories are too seldom accorded fair treatment; rather are their motives aspersed, and their characters as men of honor and lovers of justice and liberty bitterly assailed. Nothing could be more unfair or more subversive of the actual facts in many cases.

The men of Trenton who, in 1776, threw in their fortunes with the royal cause, were undoubtedly at least equal in conscience and character to their fellow townsmen who supported the cause of the patriots. It was a time that tried men's souls, and those equally intelligent and conscientious saw their duty differently.

The history of any country or of any town is largely an epitome of the doings and characters of the leading men of the era under consideration, and hence it is important as a background for an understanding of Trenton's history in the Revolutionary era to know something of the men who lived here and influenced sentiment in the community whether by their actions or by their character and attainments.

Some of the men referred to had their most conspicuous activities beyond the narrow borders of the immediate locality, but all are to be reckoned as Trentonians by their family history, associations and main interests, and thus may justly be included in this list. In considering these men let us, first, take those upon the patriotic side or at least those who ultimately inclined in that direction and, second, some of those who favored the British cause.

Possibly the most distinguished for his military services as for his close friendship with Washington was General Philemon Dickinson.

### **SOME TRENTON PATRIOTS**

*Philemon Dickinson* was a native of Maryland of Quaker stock, a brother of the famous John Dickinson, governor of Delaware and Pennsylvania and a member of the Continental Congress. He was educated as a lawyer, but does not seem ever to have practised his profession. His mother was a sister of Thomas Cadwalader, and he married successively two of his cousins, Mary and Rebecca Cadwalader. John and Lambert Cadwalader, Samuel Cadwalader Morris and Samuel Meredith were his cousins. The latter subsequently became his brother-in-law. In 1767 he came into possession of an estate near Trenton, a portion of which is in possession of his descendants today. In 1776 he bought the property known as the "Hermitage," afterwards the Atterbury estate. In July 1775 he was commissioned Colonel in the Hunterdon County Battalion and later in the same year he was made Brigadier General of the first brigade, after the battalion had been formed into two brigades. In 1776 he was a member of the Provincial Congress of New Jersey which met in Burlington. He was appointed a member of the committee to draft a constitution which after much discussion and various amendments was adopted July 2, 1776. He was present at a council of war held by Washington on Bergen Heights October 1 of that year and subsequently accompanied Washington in his retreat through New Jersey. When the American forces had crossed the Delaware under the orders of Washington, he took up his headquarters at Yardleyville. He did not participate in the First Battle of Trenton, owing to the difficulty of obtaining sufficient transportation for his troops, but remained at Yardleyville. At the second crossing of the Delaware, on December 30, he accompanied Washington and took part in the Second Battle but did not proceed to Princeton, remaining to cover the retreat and keep the camp-fires burning, thus deceiving the enemy. During the Hessian occupation of Trenton, General Dickinson's place, the "Hermitage," was devastated by the enemy. He continued his activities through the war, serving with distinction in several engagements including the battle of Monmouth. In 1777 he was commissioned Major General and

Commander-in-Chief of the Provincial forces of New Jersey in the field. In 1782 he was sent to the Continental Congress as a member from Delaware where he owned property and was thus eligible for the office. Upon the expiration of his term in Congress, Hunterdon County sent him to the New Jersey State Council of which body he was elected vice-president in October 1783. In 1784 he was one of the commissioners appointed by Congress to select a site for the national capital. In 1790 he was elected to the United States Senate to succeed Senator Patterson who had become governor of New Jersey. He remained in the Senate until 1793 when his term expired. He declined a renomination and retired to private life. He remained in Trenton, living upon his estate until his death February 4, 1809, in his seventieth year. He was buried in the graveyard of the Quaker Meeting House at Hanover and Montgomery Streets, where also lie the bodies of Colonel Lambert Cadwalader and other distinguished members of the Cadwalader, Clymer, Dickinson and Meredith families.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See *Magazine of American History*, December 1881.

Stryker says of him:

“General Dickinson was one of the truest patriots of the Revolution. Possessed of an ample fortune he devoted his wealth, his time and his talents to the glorious struggle.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p. 83.

*Lambert Cadwalader*, the cousin and later the brother-in-law of General Philemon Dickinson, though he bought property in Trenton in March 1776, did not make his permanent home here until November of that year, being meanwhile engaged with his military duties under the State of Pennsylvania. He was the son of Dr. Thomas Cadwalader who in 1746 was the chief burgess of the town and gave £500 to found a public library. His son Lambert was born in Trenton in 1742. With his brother John, Lambert was a member of the Committee of Superintendance and Correspondence which met in Philadelphia in July 1774, and also a member of the Provincial Congress which met the following January.

He was appointed January 3, 1776, to a lieutenant-colonelcy in the battalion commanded by Colonel Shee. He was made a prisoner at the capture of Fort Washington by the British November 16, 1776, but was paroled and afterwards retired to his estate in Trenton, where he remained a prisoner of war on parole until he resigned his military commission January 22, 1779.

The estate of Lambert Cadwalader on the River Road was probably a portion of the large tract formerly owned by his father Dr. Thomas Cadwalader and sold by him when he left Trenton for Philadelphia. Lambert called the place “Greenwood” and here, after he left the army, he remained, “dispensing the hospitality of the times and where one of his chief pleasures was to receive the repeated visits of Washington.”

Colonel Cadwalader represented New Jersey in the Continental Congress from 1784 to 1787 and in the Federal Congress 1789-91 and again 1793-95. He died in Trenton September 13, 1823, in the eighty-second year of his age and was buried in the Quaker graveyard at Montgomery and Hanover Streets.<sup>26</sup>



*Abraham Hunt*, in whose house Colonel Rall was being entertained on Christmas night, December 25, 1776, previous to Washington's attack the following morning, was the most prominent merchant in the town. At the time he held the commission of Lieutenant Colonel in Colonel Isaac Smith's First Regiment, Hunterdon County Militia. The charge has been brought against him that he was lukewarm in the patriotic cause, probably due to the fact that he seems to have been on good terms with the Hessian commander after his occupancy of the town. But this charge of "lukewarmness" cannot be established from the records. Possibly his Christmas entertainment of Rall was dictated by a shrewd intention to cater to the convivial habits of the Hessian commander and thus render him unfit to meet the attack the following morning, of which Hunt may have had some previous intimation through secret channels. In any event there could have been no sense in needlessly antagonizing the Hessian commander since for the time being he held Trenton in military occupancy, and could have made it distinctly unpleasant for the inhabitants and especially for persons of property like Hunt himself. Stryker in refutation of the charge against Hunt's patriotism says:

"It has never been stated that he ever claimed protection from the British. His property does not appear to have been confiscated which would have been done if he had been a Tory, and he certainly was in full enjoyment of it to the date of his death, long after the close of the war. He also retained his office of postmaster of the village under the national government for many years."

At the time of the Declaration of Independence, 1776, Hunt was one of the commissioners of the County of Hunterdon and as such disbursed funds for the purchase of firearms. He also held the same office and fulfilled the same duties in July 1777, which would hardly have been the case had his loyalty to the American cause been under suspicion. <sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Stryker, *Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 122-3.



Since Stryker wrote, researches made by Dr. Carlos E. Godfrey in the Hunterdon County court records have completely disproved Hunt's alleged toryism. The evidence was published in full with comments by Doctor Godfrey in the *Trenton Sunday Times-Advertiser*, February 26, 1922. The following is quoted from the article:

Recently numerous original manuscript minutes of the county courts throughout the Province and State of New Jersey have been transferred to the Public Record Office from the Clerk of the Supreme Court. Among these were the minutes of the Hunterdon County Court of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery, which was held at Flemington from December 23, 1777, to January 1, 1778. The court was presided over by the Hon. Isaac Smith, associate justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, and who lived in Trenton. This record has an important bearing

upon the deportment of Abraham Hunt and beyond question removes all suspicion of his being a Tory in the Revolution. On Saturday, December 27, 1777, besides the presence of justice Smith, the minutes show that Andrew Muirheid and Nathan Stout comprised the remaining members of the court. The proceedings for that day further recited, in part:

“The Justices in the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace for the County of Hunterdon handed up the following indictments found before them:

“The State vs. Abraham Hunt. Indict. High treason. It appearing to the Court, That there was but one Witness in Support of this Charge; that this Witness testified merely as to the speaking of Words of a seditious Cast; that he had been before the present Grand jury, which did not think proper to indict the Defendt. for any Offence whatever, and it being clear that an Indict. for High Treason could not be found in the Sessions of the Peace; therefore ordered, on Motion of the Atty. Gen., that the said Indictment be quashed.”

Aside from the patriotic and conscientious scruples that guided Justice Smith in his official duties, it is important to notice the composition of the grand jury - noted in the minutes, whose personnel will be recognized by many as well-known Revolutionary patriots, and who were: Jeremiah Woolsey, William Allen, Joseph Burrowes, John Carpenter, Henry Chamberlain, Joseph Hart, Amos Hart, John Moore, John Temple, Benjamin Clark, Jacob Searle, Ebenezer Rose, Stephen Burrowes, Henry Baker, Amos Scudder, Joshua Jones, Aaron Van Cleaf, Jedediah Scudder, Benjamin Parks and Isaac Gray.

As a matter of law it is well known that an indictment against a person for high treason cannot be found by parole evidence with less testimony than two witnesses. The single and unknown witness appearing in this case might have had his own peculiar notion of what constituted sedition, and, besides, he might have been an enemy of Mr. Hunt. Whatever was alleged to have been uttered by Mr. Hunt of a seditious nature, the court and grand jury were not much impressed with its truth, nor was William Patterson, the attorney-general of New Jersey, who subsequently became a justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Therefore the “historical tattle” we have listened to for years against Abraham Hunt crumbles under the slightest critical pressure through this valuable judicial document.

*David Brearley*, a man eminent as a soldier and patriot and of supreme distinction as a jurist and statesman, was born June 11, 1745, and was admitted to the Bar in 1767. He practised law in Allentown, N.J., and later moved to Trenton. He was surrogate of Hunterdon County 1777, chief justice of the Supreme Court 1779-89 and justice of the United States District Court from 1789 up to the time of his death, August 17, 1790. He married a daughter of Abraham Cottnam and in 1779 purchased the Cottnam house on Pennington Road a short distance above Calhoun.

At the commencement of the Revolution David Brearley entered the military service by being commissioned Captain in the Second Regiment, New Jersey Continental Line, October 28, 1775. On November 28 in the following year he was promoted Lieutenant Colonel of the Fourth Regiment, and transferred to the First Regiment on January 1, 1777. He resigned from this command while in service against the Indians in the Wyoming Valley to date August 4, 1779, to accept the office of chief justice. He was a member of the Convention that framed the

Constitution of the United States in 1787, and the same year member of the Convention of New Jersey that ratified the Constitution; presidential elector 1789; an original member of the New Jersey Cincinnati Society, and vice-president of the Society 1783-90.

David Brearley was one of the commissioners appointed by Congress to settle the land controversy between the States of Pennsylvania and Connecticut, which held their court at Trenton, from November 12 to December 30, 1782. Their decision, which was in favor of Pennsylvania as against Connecticut, is known in legal literature as the "Trenton Decree."<sup>28</sup> He represented St. Michael's Church in the diocesan convention of 1786 and was a deputy to the first General Convention in 1785. He was a prominent member of the Masonic order, being the first Grand Master of New Jersey. In 1924 the Grand Commandery placed a fine granite slab over his grave in St. Michael's churchyard.

<sup>28</sup> See Chap. XII below, "Courts, Judges and Lawyers."

*John Fitch*, subsequently famous as the inventor of the steamboat, came to Trenton in 1769 where he practised his trade as a gun-maker and metalworker. He rendered conspicuous service to the American cause in repairing firearms and making metal buttons. He was associated with Stacy Potts in his steel works in the making of files and other implements. When the first military company was formed in Trenton, Fitch was one of the Lieutenants and held that rank in the cantonment at Valley Forge. The Committee of Safety employed him as their gunsmith or armorer, and he was expelled from the Methodist Society, presumably for working at that business on the Sabbath. When the enemy entered Trenton in December 1776, Fitch removed to Bucks County. His shop and its contents, valued at three thousand dollars, were burned by the British as it was known that he had large contracts for the repair of American arms. Subsequently his studies in steam navigation resulted in the successful application of this power to a steamboat which plied the waters of the Delaware, 1788-1790, between Trenton and Philadelphia. Stacy Potts was one of the company formed to assist Fitch in his experiments, and he with Isaac Smith, Robert Pearson, Jr., Samuel Tucker, Abraham Hunt, Rensselaer Williams, John and Charles Clunn gave their names to the application to the Legislature of 1790 which obtained for him fourteen years' exclusive privilege on this side of the Delaware. Fitch travelled much through the country northwest of the Ohio, and made a new and accurate map of that country, generally referred to as the "Ten New States," including Kentucky. The map was advertised in *Collins' Trenton Gazette* of July 1785. He died at Bardstown, Ky., in 1798.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton*, 2nd ed., pp. 152-4.

*Isaac Smith* was a physician by profession. He was graduated from the College of New Jersey (Princeton) in 1755 and was a tutor in that institution until 1758. He studied medicine and on receiving his degree practised in Trenton. At the beginning of the troubles with Great Britain, he ranged himself definitely upon the patriotic side. When the militia was organized in 1776, he was elected Colonel of the First Militia Regiment of Hunterdon County. He resigned his position in 1777 and on February 15 of that year he was elected a justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey, serving by successive reelections until November 1, 1804. During his occupancy of this office he was elected in 1784 to the Federal Congress, serving 1795-97. He was also a presidential elector in 1800, casting his vote for John Adams. He was the first president of the Trenton Banking Company 1805-06. A biographical sketch of him was printed in the first

volume of *The Portfolio* published by Dennie in 1809, where it was said of him that “endowed with fine talents, blessed with bright and just perceptions and enjoying the glorious privileges of classical education, he united in delightful and honorable assemblage the character of a Christian, a scholar, a soldier, and a gentleman.”

He died August 20, 1807, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

*Joseph Reed*, though his conspicuous military services were not connected with this locality, but rather with the extended operation of the Continental Army, was born in Trenton, August 27, 1741. His father was Andrew Reed. He was graduated from Princeton in 1757, studied law with Richard Stockton, and was admitted to the Bar, May 13, 1763. Subsequently he went to London and continued his legal studies at the Middle Temple. In 1765 he returned to Trenton and took up his practice. In 1767 he was deputy-secretary of the Colony of New Jersey and surrogate of the Province. In 1770 Reed revisited England and was married to a daughter of Denys de Berdt. He then took up his residence in Philadelphia and his public and official life was thenceforth identified with the State of Pennsylvania. His military career was one of eminence. He was military secretary to Washington at Cambridge, Adjutant-General of the Continental Army, member of the Congress of the United States and president of the Executive Council of Pennsylvania. Colonel Reed was with General Cadwalader’s division when Washington crossed the Delaware in December 1776. He died in Philadelphia, March 5, 1785.

Stryker says of him:

“No man was more freely admitted to the counsel of General Washington than his friend Reed and to no man did he more frequently refer for advice. To him Washington always wrote with a familiarity and frankness which he never used toward any other officer. Colonel Reed was always energetic and brave, a model staff officer, a wonderfully quick penetrating genius and an accomplished gentleman. Who has not heard the indignant answer which he made to George Johnston, the English diplomatist, who had tried to bribe him to return to the support of the English Crown: ‘I am not worth purchasing, but such as I am, the King of Great Britain is not rich enough to do it.’”<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 6-7.

A controversy ensued in 1782 in regard to Reed’s military record which was made the occasion on the part of certain writers of impugning his loyalty to the American cause. This charge was renewed in the middle of the last century. Bancroft, the historian, distinctly charged Reed with being untrue to the cause of American independence, but later on in the light of newly acquired evidence acknowledged his mistake.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp. 75-8.

*William Trent*, known as “Major” Trent, was the son of Chief Justice William Trent, for whom Trenton was named. His mother was Mary Trent, his father’s second wife who died in Trenton in 1772, and was buried in the old Hopewell (Episcopal) graveyard. He was born in Philadelphia 1713 and engaged in the mercantile business, dealing especially in fur and peltries, which brought him into close relation with Indian trappers. He travelled much among them, and Cooley

(p. 284) says: “There were very few of their great treaty-making assemblies at which he was not present either as a counsellor or one of the parties or in some other official capacity.” He got his title of “Major” during what is known as “King George’s War” (1746-47), when he was in the military service of Pennsylvania.

Before his visit to England (1769) he removed to Trenton, where his family lived during his absence, and he himself after his return until 1783, when he removed to Philadelphia. He does not appear to have taken any active part in the Revolutionary War, probably because he was advanced in years when it broke out. His daughter, Mary Trent, was married to Nathan Beakes. Trent’s estate in Lambertton was advertised for sale by Elijah Bond in the *New Jersey Gazette*, July 5, 1784.

*Samuel Meredith* was born in Philadelphia in 1741, and died at his seat “Belmont,” Wayne County, Pa., February 10, 1817. He was the son of Reese Meredith, a native of Radnorshire, Wales. In 1765 he and his brother-in-law, George Clymer, the Signer, were taken into partnership with the elder Meredith as “Meredith Sons”; as such, all three signed the famous “Non-Importation Resolution” November 7, 1765. In July 1771 General Meredith married Margaret (born 1748), daughter of Dr. Thomas Cadwalader. General Meredith was evidently an owner of property in Trenton as early as 1770, as he was a vestryman of St. Michael’s parish in 1770, and again 1807-12. In 1776, Mr. Meredith was commissioned Major of the Battalion of Associators of Pennsylvania, of which his brother-in-law, John Cadwalader, was Colonel, and as such served with distinction at Princeton January 2, 1777. He served in the Pennsylvania Assembly 1779, and was General, Fourth Brigade, Pennsylvania Militia, 1778-79. In 1780 he and his brother-in-law, George Clymer, each gave £20,000 to carry on the war. In 1786-88 General Meredith was a member of the Continental Congress from Pennsylvania; surveyor of the Port of Philadelphia 1788-89; treasurer of the United States, September 30, 1789. He was a close personal friend of General Washington. Meredith was the owner of “Otter Hall,” an estate on the Delaware two miles below Trenton. The place was advertised for sale in the *Pennsylvania Journal*, February 7, 1774.

*Moore Furman*, though not living in Trenton at the time of the war, was both before and afterwards a resident of the town. In 1757 he was postmaster of Trenton where he was a merchant carrying on business under the firm name of Reed and Furman and subsequently Furman and Hunt. He removed to Philadelphia in 1762 where he lived for a period of years, but returned to Trenton in 1780 where he continued to reside until his death in this city March 16, 1808, in his eightieth year. Furman was Deputy Quartermaster General during the war, and Stryker says of him that “he was a faithful patriot and greatly entrusted by the Government and by Washington during the Revolution.” He was a trustee of the Presbyterian Church of Trenton 1760-62 and again 1783-88. His office and home were on Second Street where the Hotel Sterling now stands. He was the first mayor of Trenton under the charter of 1792.

*Robert Lettis Hooper, III*, who was Deputy Quartermaster General in 1778, was the son of Robert Lettis Hooper, II, and a grandson of Robert Lettis Hooper, I, chief justice in 1724-28. Biographical sketches of all three Hoopers are given in some detail in a later chapter, “Courts, Judges and Lawyers.”

## SOME WAVERERS

*Samuel Tucker* was a man whose patriotism has been questioned, and there was some color for this charge since he did accept protection papers from the British, but under circumstances which appear to relieve him of odium, if not of timidity and weakness. He was a man of great prominence in his day, and held many high political offices in the Province and State. He was at one time high sheriff of Hunterdon County and a member of the Provincial Congress of 1769, and also in 1772. He was most active and influential in the movement for independence.

“When the news of the Battle of Lexington (April 19, 1775) was sent by express to Philadelphia, Samuel Tucker and Isaac Smith were the Committee to receive it in Trenton, April 24, 9 a.m., and they forwarded it to Philadelphia.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Wickes, *History of Medicine in New Jersey*, p. 399.

On October 3, 1775, Tucker was elected president of the Provincial Congress, having previously been vice-president. He was again president in 1776, and he officially signed the constitution, which it adopted July 2 of that year. He was said to be responsible for the introduction of the clause which provided in the event of a reconciliation taking place between the Colonies and Great Britain the instrument should be null and void.

Gordon said: “The door of retreat was kept open by the fears of the president who a few months after claimed the clemency of the enemy, with whom this clause gave him an interest.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Gordon, *The History of New Jersey*, 1834, p. 180.

Tucker on September 4, 1776, was appointed a justice of the Supreme Court, but in January of the following year at the instance of Governor Livingston he was relieved of his office on the ground that he had taken protection from the British in the perilous days of the previous December. The Assembly resolved that “no member having taken such protection is entitled to sit in this house, and that the place of the member is vacated.” This resolution operated to exclude several others, besides Tucker.

The conditions of Tucker’s acceptance of British protection appear substantially to be as follows:

On December 9, the State Chest containing a large amount of paper money and valuable public documents which Tucker as one of the two treasurers of the State had sent away from Trenton to the house of John Abbott, five miles away, to keep from falling into the hands of the advancing British, was captured by the enemy and on the fourteenth, Tucker himself was taken prisoner near Crosswicks and was held until he obtained a “protection” from Colonel Rall, the Hessian commander. In an affidavit which he laid before the Legislature in February 1777 Tucker defends his conduct. Tucker swore that he thought it prudent to remove all his valuable papers and State papers and unsigned money from Trenton upon hearing that General Howe’s army was coming; he took them in a box to John Abbott’s house about five miles from Trenton in Burlington County and placed the papers and unsigned money amounting to £5818 under the care of Samuel and John Abbott. That Howe arrived at Trenton December 8, 1776, and on Monday, December 9, a detachment of British came to Abbott’s house in company with Mrs.

Mary Poynton and seized the property and took it to Mr. Randall Mitchell and showed the money to Mr. Mitchell and then took the property to Princeton and New Brunswick. That he [Tucker] left on December 8 and took with him £1504 of money and paid it to Treasurer Smith. That on Saturday, December 14, he heard that his family was in great distress and his wife sent him word urging him to return home; he set off for home and at Crosswicks he was met by John Leonard and about twenty others on horseback. That John Leonard placed a pistol to his breast and told him he was a prisoner; Robert Pearson gave his parole that the prisoner should remain at his farm until he was ordered home by a Hessian Lieutenant on Monday; that he applied for protection and it was granted by Colonel Rall on Monday, December 17; that he inquired for his papers and thought some had been removed to Philadelphia.

Tucker's affidavit is rather a rambling and unconvincing document, and afterwards gave rise to a controversy between him and Governor Livingston in the *New Jersey Gazette* of 1784. Elmer, in his *Reminiscences of New Jersey* (p. 266), says Tucker's "weakness in taking advantage of British protection during the panic which prevailed so extensively previous to the capture of the Hessians, was attributable perhaps to the fact that his wife was an English lady."

On March 10, 1778, Tucker was summoned to appear before the Council of Safety then meeting in Trenton, and having taken the oath of abjuration and allegiance as prescribed was thereupon dismissed.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the Council of Safety, March 10, 1778.

His lapse does not seem seriously to have affected his standing in the community since he was again elected to the Legislature 1782-84. Tucker died in 1789 and his body was interred in the graveyard of the old Hopewell Episcopal Church beside that of his wife, who had died two years earlier. Their tombstones may be seen there today, though in a much defaced condition.

*Stacy Potts* was a grandson of Thomas Potts, a Quaker who emigrated from England in company with Mahlon Stacy and his family in the ship *Shield* and landed at Burlington in the winter of 1678. The Stacy and Potts families intermarried and hence Potts acquired his given name "Stacy." He owned considerable property in Trenton and lived on the west side of King Street where St. Mary's Cathedral now stands. When Colonel Rall occupied the town in 1776, he made his headquarters at Potts' house, and died there as the result of his wounds. Potts conducted a tannery and also a steel works, and was evidently a prosperous man. His loyalty to the patriotic cause has been called in question, since he refused the oath and was subjected to a fine of £100 for which an execution was issued October 31, 1777. Presumably as a member of the Society of Friends, he had conscientious scruples against taking the oath, for there seems no reason to doubt that his personal sympathies were on the patriotic side. His apparent defection does not seem to have injured his standing in the community, since he was elected mayor of the city in 1806 and held the office for eight years.



## THE HOUSE OF STACY POTTS

*Samuel Henry*, a prominent and wealthy citizen of Trenton who was the owner of an iron works located to the east of the town on the Assunpink, had strong loyalist tendencies, which made him suspected by the patriotic element. Probably some imprudent expressions overheard by some busybody led him to be denounced by the Committee of Trenton, which presented a report to the Provincial Congress on July 10, then meeting in Trenton. An order was made that Colonel Isaac Smith be directed to employ some officers of the militia to apprehend him. On July 17, Henry appeared before the Congress and was examined. The following day it was ordered “that Samuel Henry be committed to the common gaol of Hunterdon, and kept in close confinement until the further order of this Congress or the future Legislature of the State.” On July 20 Henry presented a petition setting forth that “he is desirous of giving every reasonable satisfaction in his power that may obviate any prejudices remaining in the mind of the Convention; and that he is ready to make acknowledgments for any rash expressions that Convention may conceive he was guilty of, and for every part of his conduct that has been in their opinion exceptionable; that it is his fixed resolution so to conduct himself in future, as to afford no further room for just offense: that he is ready to give any security the Convention may think necessary to require; and praying that he may be released from his confinement.”

It was accordingly ordered “That for the contrition expressed in the above petition, Samuel Henry be discharged from his confinement, and have leave on his parole, drawn in the usual form and giving bond with security, in the sum of Two Thousand pounds, for the faithful performance of his parole, to remove to his mills in Trenton, and there, or within a circle of two miles thereof, continue and not to depart said bounds unless with the leave of this Convention or the future Legislature of this State.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Proceedings of the Provincial Congress, 1776.*

Though not a vestryman, Henry was certainly an Episcopalian, and a strong supporter of St. Michael’s Church, since he left a contingent legacy of three hundred pounds “to the Trustees or managers of the English Church in Trenton for the maintenance and support of an orthodox minister.” In St. Michael’s churchyard are the tombstones of “Samuel Henry, May 10, 1784, sixty-seven years”; “Samuel Henry, January 9, 1795, twenty-four years”; “George Henry, October 23, 1846, seventy-nine years.” There is a fourth stone in the group, marked, “Mrs. May Henry, July 23, 1804, twenty-nine years.”

Samuel Henry was a wealthy man owning extensive tracts in Nottingham and Trenton, including “the old iron works.” He also held property in Pennsylvania. For a time he occupied as his home a house on the site where the Mechanics Bank now stands. In his will he left a property in Trenton to Mary Yard, a daughter of William Yard, on condition of her keeping it as a comfortable home for his children during their minority; making special reference to the vacation



of his sons when they should be students at Princeton College. Their names, however, are not in the catalogue. <sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *History of the Presbyterian Church in Trenton*, 2nd ed., pp. 155-6.

## SOME TRENTON LOYALISTS

*Daniel Coxe, III*, among the Trenton loyalists who unequivocally favored the British cause, was probably the most distinguished on account of his wealth and family position. He was the grandson of Colonel Daniel Coxe, one of the largest land owners in New Jersey, and was born probably April 1, 1741. He studied law and was licensed as an attorney March 20, 1761, and as a sergeant November 15, 1772. He was a vestryman of St. Michael's Church with which his father and grandfather before him had been associated. He was appointed a member of the Governor's Council May 1, 1771, and remained such until the close of that body's existence in 1773. He was a zealous loyalist, and expressed himself freely regarding the burning political questions of the day. In a letter dated July 4, 1775, he viewed with prophetic insight the cruel plight to which such as he would be reduced:

What then have men of property not to fear and apprehend, and particularly those who happen and are known to differ in sentiment from the generality? They become a mark for popular fury, and those who are esteemed friends to Government devoted for destruction. They are not even allowed to preserve a neutrality, and passiveness becomes a crime. <sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. IX.

His fine residence in Trenton was burned by the British forces and sacked by the Hessians, during their pursuit of Washington in December 1776, but this did not impair his attachment to the royal cause.

In the winter of 1777 and spring of 1778, he raised the West Jersey Volunteers. During the British occupation of Philadelphia he acted as magistrate of police without emolument. He accompanied the army to New York, serving as a member of the Board of Associated Loyalists. He was also chairman of the Associated Refugees. In 1780 he was secretary to the British commissioners to receive and pardon penitent rebels, an office which proved a sinecure.

He petitioned the British government March 13, 1784, for reimbursement for his losses sustained during the war. The British government granted him on his arrival in England, in 1784, a £500 annuity. The *Gentleman's Magazine* announces the death of Mr. Coxe thus: "March 10, 1826. In upper Seymour street, aged 87, Daniel Coxe, Esq." In 1828 his widow, Sarah, daughter of Dr. John Redman of Philadelphia, whom he had married June 5, 1771, brought suits in New Jersey for her dower rights in his property, which had been confiscated, and recovered judgment therefor. <sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, PP. 84, 85, 86 abridged.

Coxe filed with the British Government a schedule of his properties in the Counties of Hunterdon, Burlington, Sussex, Somerset, Salem, and Cape May. He refers to the looting of the

elegant house of Daniel Coxe by the British. He is careful to state that his houses and property were taken possession of by the Hessians and that notwithstanding his well-known character as a loyalist and the remonstrances of his friends and servants, his rooms, his stores and cellars were broken open, ransacked and pillaged, and all the furniture, china, glass and liquors were plundered, destroyed, or taken away, leaving the place a scene of wanton destruction.

He estimated his total losses at £40,267 11s. 6d. His property in Trenton included his mansion house grounds on Second Street; 507 acres at Belmont Farm, situated ten miles above Trenton on the river, and having a patent ferry; 495 acres of land comprehending his Trenton ferry estate and patent; Douglass Farm, and Lambertton. <sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Loyalists' Transcripts filed in England*, New York Public Library, Vol. 38, 295.

*Grace Coxe*, daughter of Daniel Coxe, III, of Trenton, married John Tabor Kempe of New York in 1766. He was a native of England and a son of William Kempe, attorney-general of New York. He was appointed to succeed his father in the same office, July 1759, and held the position until the War of the Revolution. He became one of the proprietors of 100,000 acres of land granted to Daniel, William and Rebecca Coxe, John Tabor Kempe and Grace, his wife, in exchange for the Province of Carolina, owned by Colonel Daniel Coxe. Kempe was attainted for treason in New York and New Jersey and his property confiscated. Kempe and his wife went to England, where he died in 1791. His widow survived him until 1831, when she died at Clifton, Gloucestershire, England.

*John Barnes* was high sheriff of Hunterdon County from May 24, 1775, to July 18, 1776, when he was superseded by the Provincial Congress of New Jersey because he refused to execute the writs issued by its authority. Barnes had taken an active part in the military affairs of the Colony, first as a Lieutenant from August 23, 1746, in the company of Captain John Dagworthy, Jr., in which he had been granted a commission in acknowledgment of his services in recruiting men for the intended expedition to Canada. His original commission describes him as a "gentleman." His occupation seems to have been that of a distiller. He was appointed high sheriff of Hunterdon County by Governor William Franklin, which was a lucrative office, yielding an annual income in fees of £600.

His home in Trenton on Queen Street, below Front, is described as "a large and commodious mansion, two stories high, with stables and other buildings." This house was used by General Washington as his headquarters from December 30, 1776, to January 2, 1777.

Barnes was a vestryman of St. Michael's Church.

*The Proceedings of the Provincial Congress*, under dates July 18 and 20, 1776, give the details as to the official charges brought against Barnes

July 18, 1776.

The petition of Ebenezer Cowel, Jun., setting forth that John Barnes Esq., high sheriff of the County of Hunterdon, had refused to receive and execute two writs issued under the authority of the people, pursuant to the ordinances of this Convention read:

Whereupon *Ordered* that Mr. Barnes immediately attend this House. Mr. Barnes appeared before this House and, in answer to the above charge, informed the Convention that he declines acting as sheriff under the authority of the people, and is willing to be superseded; wherefore:

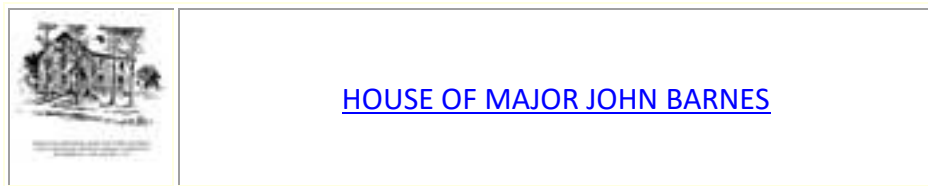
Resolved that a new sheriff be appointed.

July 20.

Ordered That William Tucker Esq. of Trenton, be sheriff of the County of Hunterdon, until a sheriff be chosen at the ensuing election and that a commission be made out accordingly.

Following his resignation of his office as sheriff Barnes openly identified himself with the loyalist cause. In November 1776 he was appointed Major in the First Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers. He was severely wounded August 22, 1777, in the attack on the British posts on Staten Island, and died August 31, 1777. Stryker says of him “he was much lamented as a worthy man and a gallant officer.”

The whole of his property was confiscated and sold by the State. His widow lived upon a pension granted by the British government until her death, April 14, 1807.



*Isaac Allen* was a son of John Allen, a distinguished citizen of Trenton for many years, and an associate justice of the Supreme Court of New Jersey. Isaac was graduated from Princeton in 1762, and admitted to the New Jersey Bar in 1765. He was a convinced and zealous loyalist, and joined Sir William Howe’s command in December 1776. He was a warden of St. Michael’s Church when the war broke out.

The family of Isaac Allen left their home in Trenton, accepted protection papers, and were ever afterwards considered subjects of King George. Isaac Allen was commissioned Lieutenant Colonel, commanding Sixth Battalion New Jersey Volunteers (loyalist), December 3, 1776; commanding Third Battalion, April 25, 1778; commanding Second Battalion, July 24, 1781; retired, October 13, 1783. He was at the siege of Savannah, Ga., October 9, 1779, and commandant of Charleston, S.C., July to December, 1782. During the war all his property in Trenton, which was considerable, was confiscated. In the year 1783, having removed to St. John, N.B., he resumed his profession as a lawyer. He was one of the grantees of that city and among other offices he held a seat in the council and was a judge of the Supreme Court. His death

occurred in Kingsclear, N.B., October 12, 1806, in the sixty-fifth year of his age. He married in 1769, Sarah, daughter of Thomas Campbell of Philadelphia.

Isaac Allen's property in Trenton included a dwelling house of stone, two stories high, and a farm on the Delaware within half a mile of the town. In addition he owned property in Philadelphia. An account of his estate in Hunterdon County, which was confiscated and sold, puts the value at £5,076 currency. An affidavit as to the value of his real property was signed by Abraham Hunt and Isaac DeCou, high sheriff. Allen was granted £925 by the British government in partial payment of his losses.

*John Allen* was probably a brother of Isaac Allen, and was evidently a man of considerable standing and property. He was the owner of the Union Iron Works in what is now Union Township. He was elected a member of the Provincial Congress from Hunterdon County in 1776 and took his seat at the first session, which was held in Burlington June 10 of that year. His colleagues from the county were Philemon Dickinson, Samuel Tucker, John Hunt and John Mehelm. He appears to have voted with the minority and against all radical measures. Scarcely had he taken his seat when a petition was presented to the Congress from sundry inhabitants of Hunterdon County, praying that his election for reasons mentioned in the petition might be vacated. The petition was not granted. Allen's name does not appear as voting after June 21, and the probabilities are that he vacated his seat finding that the Congress was bent upon taking steps that were opposed to the loyalist sentiments which he professed.

On Friday, July 25, 1777, he was cited to appear before the Council of Safety when he refused the oath, and was committed to the Trenton gaol. Allen is mentioned in a letter written by Governor Livingston to John Hancock in October, 1777, as a loyalist whose "influence in spreading disaffection in the county was notorious." In 1778-79 judgment was rendered against his estate.

*Dr. William Bryant*, who at the time of the war was living temporarily in Bloomsbury Court, the mansion built by Colonel William Trent in 1721, was a loyalist in his sentiment as shown by his over-friendliness with the Hessians when they occupied the town under Colonel Rall in December 1776. On December 23, 1776, he informed Colonel Rall that "he had just heard from a negro who had crossed the river that the rebels had drawn rations for several days, and were about to attack Trenton," but Rall regarded the information as "old women's talk."

Dr. Bryant was the son of Captain William Bryant, of Perth Amboy, a mariner, of whom it is recorded on his tombstone that he had made fifty-five voyages in the merchant service between the ports of New York and London. His son William was born January 11, 1730[-31]. After his father's death he studied medicine and settled in New York where he practised for a few years, removing to Trenton in 1769, where he purchased a home. In Trenton he speedily acquired a reputation as a successful physician. He appears to have been recognized as a man of scholarly tastes, being elected a member of the American Philosophical Society January 21, 1774; he read a paper before the Society, an "Account of an Electrical Eel or Torpedo from Surinam," which is published in the *Transactions* of the Society, Vol. XI, 166 (old series).

Notwithstanding his loyalist sentiments Bryant continued to reside in Trenton undisturbed by his neighbors and from time to time rendered medical service to the American soldiers. He associated with him in his practice Dr. Nicholas de Belleville, a French physician, who came to this country in 1777 in the suite of Count Pulaski, and whom Dr. Bryant persuaded to settle in Trenton. Bryant was an extensive holder of real estate in Trenton. His will was proved June 2, 1786, by which he left a considerable estate in real and personal property, including several negro slaves. <sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *Collections of the New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. IX, pp. 56-8.

*Charles Harrison* was a resident of Trenton and a vestryman of St. Michael's Church. He became Captain in the Sixth Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers (loyalist), December 16, 1776. He was taken prisoner on Laurence Island, near New Brunswick, February 18, 1777, and exchanged August 20, 1778, while a prisoner in the Yorktown, Va., jail. He served later as a Captain in the Third Battalion, then as Captain in the Second and was retired October 13, 1783. He had been previously commissioned Captain in the Hunterdon County Militia August 30, 1775, but resigned on July 8, 1776, when he openly embraced the cause of the loyalists.

*The Reverend George Panton*, who was rector of St. Michael's Church when the war broke out, was born in Scotland and in 1770 went out to America as a tutor to a young man. In 1773 he became rector of St. Michael's Church. As a clergyman of the Church of England he was naturally a strong loyalist. Compelled to flee the town on account of his political sentiments he sought the protection of the British authorities. He joined the British army at White Plains before the action in October 1776. He remained with the army and was appointed Chaplain to the Prince of Wales American Regiment by Sir William Howe.

The evidence presented to the British authorities shows the character of his services to the British cause, of which the following is a transcript. <sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *First Report of Bureau of Archives, Province of Ontario*, 1903, Vol. I, P. 53, compiled from the original rolls by Dr. C. E. Godfrey.

Says that in conjunction with Dr. Inglis, Dr. Cooper & Dr. Chandler, published essays in support of the British Govt.

Produces Copy of a Petition to the Assembly of New Jersey from the Freeholders of Nottingham Township, N. Jersey, expressive of Loyal Sentiments & attachment to the British Govt. & desiring that they would use their endeavours to promote a reconciliation with Gt. Britain & of their disapprobation of the conduct of persons concerned in the late disputes, Dated 20th May, 1775. Says he drew up this paper & had it signed by many respectable Inhabitants, in consequence of that he was obliged to leave the country.

Produces a Letter from Dr. Inglis, April 5th, 1776, requesting the claimant to take care & carry a manuscript to Humphreys the Publisher at Philadelphia. This manuscript was a Loyal Pamphlet which had been burnt by the Rebels at New York.

He joined the British Army at White Plains, before the action in October, 1776, & did everything in his power in Conducting & Assisting the Army & gave information of the proper persons to be intrusted & employed, he gave a sketch of the Country to Major Montessor.

He attended Sir Henry Clinton to Ft. Montgomery as a volunteer.

He remained with the Army all the war and was apptd Chaplain to the Prince of Wales American Regt by Sir Wm. Howe.

He left New York 1784. He received £30 pr. an. from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

Living was worth £80 pr. an. Pen. Curry, raised of a voluntary Subscription of the Inhabitants of the Parish.

Surplus fees were worth £20 pr. an.

Library - left at Trenton when he fled. His books were destroyed by the Americans in December, 1776, at Rawle's defeat. Values his books at £60 Pen. Curry.

Linen, Furniture & Clothing lost at the same time £32 P. Curry, Manuscripts, lost at the same time £100 P. Curry.

Raymond, in *Winslow Papers*, says, p. 29, n.:

Rev. George Panton, M.A., of Trenton, N.J., and afterwards of Phillipsburg (now Yonkers), N.Y. During the war he was chaplain of the Prince of Wales American Regiment. At the peace he came to Nova Scotia and became S.P.G. missionary at Yarmouth.

One of the most notable loyalists in New Jersey was *Major Walter Rutherford*, who if not a resident of Trenton had an estate in Hunterdon County which he called "Edgerston" from his ancestral home in Scotland. He was the father of John Rutherford who for a few years made his home in Trenton and was a warden and trustee of St. Michael's Church 1800-06.

Walter Rutherford was born in Scotland December 29, 1723, the sixth son of Sir John Rutherford of Roxburgshire. Walter held a commission in the British army. At the outbreak of the French and Indian War he was ordered to America. He was promoted to the rank of Major of the Sixty-second or Royal American Regiment, and was retired at the close of the successful campaign of 1760. He married in 1758 the widow of Elisha Parker of Perth Amboy. Mrs. Rutherford's brother was William Alexander, known as "Lord Sterling." Major Rutherford lived for a period after his retirement in New York City. Both he and his wife were possessed of ample means. In 1775 he received for his military services a patent for five thousand acres of land in Tyron (now Montgomery) County, N.Y. When the War of the Revolution broke out Major Rutherford naturally was reluctant to take up arms against the government which had treated him so handsomely, and he accordingly retired to his estate in Hunterdon County in company with John Stevens, his brother-in-law, and James Parker, hoping thus to keep out of the turmoil of the

struggle then raging in New Jersey. He was not long left undisturbed, but was ferreted out in his retirement, and refusing to take the oath before the court at Trenton, under orders of Governor Livingston was arrested with his relative James Parker, and removed and imprisoned August 1777 at Morristown, being held as hostage for the proper treatment and safe delivery of two well-known patriots, Judge John Fell and Wynant Van Zandt, who had been captured by the Tories and who, it was reported, had been treated with undue severity. Rutherford and Parker were well treated, their imprisonment being a nominal one, and placed under bond of £2000 to remain at the court house in Morris County or within a mile of it. On the representation of his wife, the Council of Safety permitted him to go to his home and remain there for ten days at the expiration of which time he was required to return to his confinement. He was fined £50, August 8, 1777. At the conclusion of the war Rutherford returned to New York City, where he died January 10, 1804.

### A WOMAN LOYALIST

Women loyalists sometimes made as much trouble for the patriotic party as did men, and were perhaps even more cantankerous in their opposition. *Mary Rutherford Poynton* of Trenton, the daughter of Elisha Beadles and his wife Mary, who married as her first husband Samuel Rutherford, son of James and Mary Rutherford of Trenton, is a conspicuous example in point. She had married in 1772 as her second husband Major Brereton Poynton, an officer in the British army who had served against the French in Canada. Their marriage is recorded in the Parish Register of St. Michael's Church, September 22, 1772. Subsequently Major Poynton served in the West Indies, but returned to Trenton in 1774, going back to join his command there, however, before the war in America broke out. His wife was told that if she wrote to her husband and persuaded him to join the American army he would be made a Brigadier General. He seems not to have served on either side. Mary Poynton owned much property in Trenton, including a house opposite St. Michael's Church. Her mother married for her second husband Elijah Bond, whom his step-daughter describes as "a great Rebel and a great enemy to her." According to Daniel Coxe, Mary Poynton "rather spoke her mind too plain." In her Memorial of April 8, 1789, she states that a separation was about to take place between her husband and herself. The Poyntons were allowed by the British government £775 for their claim of £1,764 6s.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *Collections of New Jersey Historical Society*, Vol. X, pp. 173-4.