

DOCUMENTS
RELATING TO THE
REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY
OF THE
STATE OF NEW JERSEY.

VOLUME I.

EXTRACTS FROM AMERICAN NEWSPAPERS.
VOL. I. 1776—1777.

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These do not need any proof, as they occur so frequently in the newspapers printed under their direction, and in the intercepted letters of those who are officers, and call themselves gentlemen. It is easy, therefore, to see what must be the conduct of a soldiery greedy of prey, towards a people whom they have been taught to look upon not as freemen defending their rights on principle, but as desperadoes and profligates, who have risen up against law and order in general, and with the subversion of society itself.

This is the most candid and charitable manner in which the Committee can account for the melancholy truths which they have been obliged to report. Indeed the same deluding principle seems to govern persons and bodies of the highest rank in Britain, for it is worthy of notice that not pamphleteers only but King and Parliament constantly call those acts lenity, which on their first publication filled this whole continent with resentment and horror.

The above report received, approved and ordered to be published with the proofs.

CHARLES THOMSON, Secretary.

(The Proofs will be inserted in this paper.)

—*The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, April 24, 1777.

Appendix to the Report of the Committee, containing proofs and illustrations.

On the first head of the report.

The substance of this part of the report it would be unnecessary to take or publish depositions upon as the state of the country has been seen by thousands who have travelled through it. The public has also long ago been made acquainted with the burning of Falmouth in Casco Bay—of a very considerable part of the city of New York—and a part of Brunswick—One of the best houses in Princeton was burnt while the enemy stayed there, and a valuable mill, with other buildings, at about one mile distance from it.

The following account of their conduct in Newark, and the neighbourhood, contained in a letter from a minister of the most approved character in that part of the country, to a Member of Congress, will enable those at a distance to form some conception of the sufferings of the country.

Extract of a letter from Newark, March 12, 1777.

“Great have been the ravages committed by the British troops in this part of the country, as to what has been done by them in Trenton, Princeton, &c. you have seen. Their footsteps with us are marked with desolation and ruin of every kind. I, with many others fled, from the town, and those that tarried behind suffered almost every manner of evil. The murder, robbery, ravishments, and insults, they were guilty of are dreadful. When I returned to the town, it looked more like a scene of ruin than a pleasant well cultivated village

One Thomas Hayes, who lived about three miles out of town, as peaceable and inoffensive a man as in the state of New Jersey, was unprovokedly murdered by one of their Negroes, who run him through the body with his sword. He also cut and slashed his aged uncle in such a manner that he is not yet recovered of his wounds, though received about three months ago. The same fellow stabbed one Nathan Baldwin in the neighbourhood, who recovered. Three women were most horridly ravished by them, one of them an old woman near seventy years of age, whom they abused in a manner beyond description, another of them was a woman considerably advanced in her pregnancy, and the third was a young girl. Various others were assaulted by them, who, by the favorable interpositions of Providence, were preserved, that they did not accomplish upon them their base designs. Yea, not only common soldiers, but officers, even British officers, four or five, sometimes more sometimes less in a gang, went about the town by night entering into houses and openly inquiring for women.

“Their plundering is so universal, and their robberies so atrocious, that I cannot fully describe their conduct, Whig and Tory were all treated in the same manner, except such who were happy enough to procure a sentinel to be placed as a guard at their door. There was one Nutman, who had always been a remarkable Tory, and who met the British troops with huzzas of joy, had his house plundered of almost everything; he himself had his shoes taken off his feet, and threatened to be hanged, so that with difficulty he escaped being murdered by them. It was diligently propagated by the Tories, before the enemy came, that all those who tarried in their houses would not be plundered, which induced some to stay, who otherwise would probably have saved many of their effects by removing them. But nothing was a greater deception or baser falsehood than this, as the event proved, for none were more robbed than those that tarried at home with their families. I shall only here mention a few names, John Ogden; Esq;¹ an aged man, who had never done much in the controversy one way or another; they carried out of his house every thing they thought worth bearing away; they ripped open the feather beds, scattered the feathers in the air, and carried the ticks with them; broke his desk to pieces, and tore and destroyed a great number of important papers, deeds, wills, &c belonging to himself and others, and they insulted and abused the old gentleman in the most outrageous manner, threatening sometimes to hang him, and sometimes to cut off his head. They hauled a sick son of his, whose life had been for some time despaired of, out of his bed, and grossly abused him, threatening him with death in a variety of forms.

¹Judge John Ogden was a son of Captain David Ogden, of Newark, and was a Justice of the Peace and a Judge of the Essex County Courts for many years. In 1759 he moderated the meeting which installed the Rev. Alexander Macwhorter as pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Newark. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1751, and re-elected in 1761. With his uncle, Colonel Josiah Ogden, and his brothers, David and Uzal, he formed the Ringwood Company, for the development of the iron mines and works in the upper part of the present Passaic county.—*E. D. H.*

"The next neighbour to this Ogden was one Benjamin Coe,¹ a very aged man, who, with his wife, was at home; they plundered and destroyed every thing in the house, and insulted them with such fury and rage, that the old people fled for fear of their lives; and then to shew the fulness of their malice, they burnt his house to ashes. Zophar Beach,² Josiah Beach,³ Samuel Pennington,⁴ and others, who had large families, and were all at home, they robbed in so egregious a manner, that they were hardly left a rag of clothing, save what was on their backs. The mischief committed in the houses forsaken of their inhabitants, the destruction of fences, barns, stables, and other outhouses, the breaking of chests of drawers, desks, tables and other furniture, the burning and carrying away of carpenters and shoemakers tools are intirely beyond description.

"Now this is only a faint account of the justice and humanity of the British troops. They fully answer the character of the wicked, whose mercies are cruelty. For in addition to all, they imposed an oath of absolute submission to the British King, turning the declaration contained in Howe's proclamation into an oath, and causing the people solemnly to swear the same. Those who took the oath, and obtained what were falsely called protections, there are instances with us of these being robbed and plundered afterwards, but the most general way in which they obtained the effects of such people was by bargaining with them for their hay, cattle

¹ Benjamin Coe came from Long Island with his widowed mother to Newark prior to 1732, and died December 21st, 1788, aged 86 years. He left children—1. Benjamin; 2. Mary, wife of Moses Roberts; 3. Sarah, wife of David Tuttle; 4. Eunice, wife of Joseph Baldwin; and 5. Abigail, wife of Daniel Tichenor. His first wife, Abigail, died December 4th, 1761, aged 59 years; his second wife, Rachel, died August 12th, 1779, aged 70 years. Being too old for active service himself, Benjamin Coe furnished a substitute, in the person of an able-bodied negro slave, Cudjo, who was rewarded by his master with the gift of his freedom and an acre of land. Mr. Coe's house was at the southwest corner of Washington and Court streets. For an inventory of his property destroyed by the British, see *N. J. Hist. Soc. Proc.*, I., 44, 45.—*W. N.*

² Zophar Beach was a grandson of Zophar, born May 27th, 1662, at Milford, Conn., and who settled at Newark prior to 1685. The Zophar of the Revolutionary epoch volunteered as a sailor in the American cause, and afterwards as a soldier.—*W. N.*

³ Josiah Beach was doubtless the son of Josiah Beach and Annanias Day; the latter Josiah was a son of Zophar Beach, one of the early settlers of Newark, mentioned in the preceding note.—*W. N.*

⁴ Samuel Pennington was a son of Judah, son of Ephraim, born 1615, one of the first settlers of Newark, and who died about 1694. Samuel married Mary Sandford, daughter of William, who died about 1750, son of William (baptized November, 1696, died 1750), son of William (died 1733) son of William Sandford, of the Island of Barbadoes, who bought, July 4th, 1668, the land lying between the Passaic and Hackensack rivers, from Newark bay northerly to Sandford's Spring (afterwards known as Boiling Spring), now Rutherford. Samuel Pennington was a resident of Newark, where he was a Trustee of the First Presbyterian Church. He died August 6th, 1791. He had ten children, the sixth being William Sandford, born 1757, Lieutenant of artillery in the Revolution; member of the New Jersey Assembly, 1797-8-9; of the Council, 1801-2; admitted to the bar, 1802; Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, 1804-13; Law Reporter, 1806-13; Governor of New Jersey, 1813-14; United States District Court Judge, 1815, until his death, September 17th, 1826.—*W. N.*

or corn, promising them pay, but none with us ever received any thing worth mentioning.

I might have observed, that it was not only the common soldiers that plundered and stole, but also their officers, and not merely low officers and subalterns, but some of high rank were aiding and abetting and reaped the profits of this business, no less a person than Gen. Erskine,¹ who lodged at Daniel Baldwin's had his room furnished from a neighbouring house with mahogany chairs and tables, a considerable part of which was taken away with his baggage when he went to Elizabeth Town. Col. M'Donald who made his quarters at Alexander Robinson's had his room furnished in the same felonious manner, and the furniture was carried off, as though it had been part of his baggage. Another Colonel, whose name I have forget, sent his servants who took away a sick woman's bed, Mrs. Crane's, from under her for him to sleep upon. But there is no end of describing their inhuman conduct. And what they practised in this town seems, as far as I can hear, only a sample of their general treatment of the inhabitants wherever they came²

[To be continued]

ALEX. M'WHORTER.³"

The Commanding Officers of the Continental battalions in the states of New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland are hereby requested immediately to send such of the sick belonging to their respective corps as are in a situation to be removed, to the general hospital in Philadelphia, where the utmost care will be taken of them, agreeable to the plan for regulating the military hospitals lately established by the Honourable Congress.

THOMAS BOND, jun. Assistant Director.

N. B. Dr Bond, jun. is to be found at the Director General's house in Fourth street.

—*The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, April 26, 1777.

¹ Sir William Erskine was a British officer who came to America as a Brigadier-General; commanded the Seventh British Brigade at the battle of Long Island; was promoted a Major-General in 1781; a Lieutenant-General in 1789, and made a Baronet of the British Empire in 1791.

² Then follows a description of the treatment received by some men taken prisoners at Fort Washington, but as none of them were New Jersey men, it is omitted.

³ Rev. Dr. Alexander Macwhorter was born in New Castle, Delaware, July 26th, 1734; was graduated from Princeton College in 1757; studied theology with the celebrated William Tennent, and in 1759 became pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Newark. He was an active patriot during the Revolutionary War; followed the American Army on the retreat through New Jersey, and took part in the council of war before the surprise at Trenton. In 1778 he was Chaplain of the Artillery Brigade, Continental Army. In 1779 he removed to Mecklenburg, North Carolina, and in 1781 returned to Newark. He was a Trustee of Princeton College, 1772-1807. He died in Newark, New Jersey, July 20th, 1807.