

In August 1798, Howell was involved in the sedition charges brought against the most ardent Republican organ in New Jersey, the *Newark Centinel of Freedom*. In May, Republican militia officers had refused to add their names to the state militia's expression of support for the Federalist president, John Adams. As head of the militia, Howell lashed out at them publicly for this. In reply, the Republicans forwarded an address to Howell, charging that the president was at fault, not they. Adams had violated the constitution they said, and therefore they had no confidence in the government. Governor Howell then attacked his addressers as "the shreds of a French faction [that operated as a] dagger in the hands of . . . [a French] assassin." In the *Centinel*, the Republicans now called him "the Prince of Blackguards." This epithet formed the basis for the governor's charges of seditious libel against the newspaper.

Considering his background, it is not surprising that when a Federalist party split occurred in the late 1790s, the militant Howell sided with war and the army. Under orders from Major General Alexander Hamilton, Howell gladly raised an infantry regiment in case of a French invasion.

Finally, in February 1799, when Fries's Rebellion broke out in Pennsylvania protesting the taxes levied to support the provisional army and other elements of the Federalist defense program, Howell responded with alacrity to President Adams's order to ready two thousand New Jersey militiamen to march. His prompt, decisive action brought one Philadelphia militant Federalist newspaper's praise: "What a charming thing it would be if every state had such a governor as New Jersey! . . . It will be long, very long indeed, 'ere Poor Pennsylvania will see a Howell in her chair of state."

Howell's last term in office ended in October 1801, when the Federalists lost the state. Disgrace and death followed in quick succession. As soon as the Republicans had taken office, the legislature

accused Howell of failing to account for all monies spent on military preparedness and ordered him to give the state treasurer the unexpended monies and a statement of expenditures. The investigation was incomplete in April 1802, when Howell died with a clouded reputation—at least in Republican minds. In his obituary, the Republican press stated that he was possibly guilty of embezzling funds. The Federalists answered that Howell's failing health had prevented him from maintaining proper accounts.

At the end of Howell's long tenure as governor, six months before his death, the Federalists acknowledged publicly that he had not been a statesman of the first magnitude. His popularity with his electors, the members of the Federalist-dominated New Jersey legislature, surpassed his effectiveness as governor.

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JOSEPH BLOOMFIELD (October 18, 1753–October 3, 1823) was the fourth governor of the state (1801–2; 1803–12) and the first Jeffersonian-Republican to hold the office. He was first elected in 1801, then

successively each year from 1803 to 1812. Described by a contemporary as "rich," and taking great pride in his occasional military service (he preferred to be called "General" rather than "Excellency"), Bloomfield managed to combine the roles of governor and party leader during his long tenure in office. This accomplishment was all the more pronounced because the governor's office possessed but few constitutional and appointive powers and no popular mandate: the post was filled by the joint meeting of the New Jersey Legislature and not by popular election until after 1844. Despite the office's inherent weakness in an era of legislative domination, Bloomfield remained a powerful figure in New Jersey for nearly a quarter century.

Bloomfield was born in Woodbridge into a notable family of English origin. His father, Moses Bloomfield, a well-to-do physician and a political figure, served in both the colonial New Jersey Assembly and the Provincial Congress that replaced it at the beginning of the American Revolution. Joseph was educated at an academy in South Jersey, and he had almost finished reading law when the Revolution began. He dropped his studies to accept a captain's commission in the new Continental army, where he served with distinction in the New Jersey Brigade and other units, resigning in 1778 with the rank of major. In that year he married Mary McIlvaine, settled in Burlington, and was admitted to the bar. The Bloomfields had no children, but adopted their nephew Joseph McIlvaine and raised him.

His elite background, revolutionary service, inherited wealth and urbanity all propelled him toward political leadership at a time when many of his class had chosen to side with the Loyalists. After a period of indecision, Joseph Bloomfield emerged as one of the few genuine landed "aristocrats" in New Jersey to join the Jeffersonian cause instead of the more mainline Federalist party in the decade following the ratification of the federal Constitution in 1788.

At first, there was little to indicate that Bloomfield was anything but a good Federalist supporter of Washington's. He was a presidential elector for Washington in 1792, and as the general commanding the New Jersey militia he accepted the president's call to lead the state's troops in helping to suppress the Whiskey Rebellion. Jay's Treaty with Great Britain in 1795 and, a year later, Washington's announcement that he would retire and support John Adams to replace him, however, gave the prominent militia general cause to ponder his future allegiances. In 1796, as politics in New Jersey became heated for the first time since ratification, rumors of his defection to the Anti-Federalists (budding Jeffersonian-Republicans) began to circulate. He protested, "I am a friend of the President and Government, [as] I have already evinced . . . in 1792 and . . . 1794." In July of 1797, moreover, Bloomfield wrote to his friend and New Jersey compatriot Jonathan Dayton, Federalist Speaker of the House of Representatives, recommending an office seeker "as a good federalist."

Bloomfield finally surfaced as a Jeffersonian later that year, but his Federalist ties haunted him throughout his political career. When he appointed a Federalist to office in 1801, for example, one Republican congressman commented that it was "just like him." A year later another congressman commented that Bloomfield was still susceptible to "Federal Flattery and Deception." As late as 1811, after Bloomfield had spent a successful decade as the Jeffersonian-Republican governor of New Jersey, still another party manager wrote cynically, "I did not suppose that any one expected [sic] Bloomfield of belonging to the Republican party from principle."

Despite such lingering suspicions, Bloomfield had been a key figure in cementing the Jeffersonian party organization in the state in the years 1796-1800. He continued to identify with Republican party issues, opposing both the foreign policies of John Adams and the Alien and Sedition Laws of 1798.

Parvenu New Jersey Jeffersonian politicians—they were often “new men” brought forward politically by the Revolution—were flattered by invitations to caucus at the Bloomfield family residence in Burlington, with its “fine library and many curiosities.” In 1800, after Bloomfield was named chairman of the first statewide Republican nominating convention, a party device introduced to cultivate unity for the pending congressional and presidential elections, he emerged as the titular leader of the party. The New Jersey Jeffersonian Party’s efforts in these elections marked its coming of age, and in 1801, for the first time, it captured control of the state. Bloomfield’s leadership was instrumental in achieving the victory, and the Jeffersonian legislative majority elected him governor for the constitutionally prescribed one-year term. A legislative deadlock prevented the election of a governor in 1802, but in 1803 and successively through 1811 Bloomfield was reelected with awesome regularity.

Although he had almost no constitutional authority, Bloomfield used his position as party leader with surgical precision to strengthen the governor’s office. The state legislature, dominated by a Jeffersonian-Republican majority, introduced the institution of the caucus to encourage party regularity; as a state institution, the caucus has survived the hazards of almost two centuries, down to the present. Bloomfield came to be a fixture in the caucus, which, while he remained governor, was not limited to legislators but included other representative party leaders. He combined this personal authority with the prestige he commanded in Washington, D.C., as an important spokesman for the state party to the Jeffersonian administration. As a result, his was a strong voice in dispensing patronage in the state. He wrote to President Jefferson outlining New Jersey’s appointive priorities under the new national administration, and Jefferson chided him for his long shopping list: “It is the case of one loaf and ten men want-

ing bread.” But Bloomfield delivered the federal offices in 1801 and thereafter, and Jefferson seldom afterward treated him lightly.

As governor, Bloomfield used his moral and political leadership to initiate the gradual emancipation of slavery in New Jersey. His father before him had staunchly opposed bondage, freeing fourteen slaves at the time of the Revolution. Joseph himself was a longtime leader of the New Jersey Society for the Abolition of Slavery. A potent lobbyist, he was instrumental in promoting a considerable measure of Republican unity against slavery. Although he was accused of turning his back on his elite ties and background, he also favored controversial legislative reform measures to tax dividends from private bank stock and the creation of state-chartered banks to thwart monopolistic private banking interests in New Jersey.

During his last years in office, from 1808 to 1812, Bloomfield—like Republican officeholders everywhere—was caught up in defending unpopular foreign policy measures emanating from Washington. In an effort to protect American sovereignty while keeping the nation out of war with England, the Jefferson and Madison administrations had introduced successive measures embargoing trade with England, inevitably interrupting commerce with all of Europe. The consequent economic recession and the popular emotional reactions to continuing impressment of American sailors on the high seas placed New Jersey’s Republicans on the defensive and caused a division in party ranks. Bloomfield contended expertly with these political difficulties, defending his party against allegations that it was “the party of war.” In the five years before the War of 1812, Jeffersonian-Republicans were hopelessly divided by foreign policy questions and Federalists were revitalized by them, but even so Bloomfield managed to gain reelection in the joint meeting of the legislature each October. When war was finally declared in June 1812, Bloomfield promptly resigned

as governor in midterm to accept President Madison's nomination as brigadier general in the rapidly expanding United States Army.

Evidence of Bloomfield's personal popularity and of the unifying strength of his party leadership became all too clear in the succeeding legislative election for governor in October 1812; for the first time in more than a decade a Federalist was named to fill the chair vacated by "the General." Although his military service was much more prosaic than colorful slogans would suggest (he spent his three years in the military organizing and supervising training and defense establishments in New York and Pennsylvania), he must have been touched by the thoughts of those Republican celebrants who toasted him at a party gathering on the Fourth of July, 1812: "When in the camp, on the march, or under the walls of Quebec, may he never want the genuine character of a Jersey Blue."

When the war ended in 1815, General Bloomfield retired to his mansion in Burlington. His ease was short-lived; his personal popularity and ability to unite warring factions of the party resulted in his election to two terms in the House of Representatives, in 1816 and 1818. Only in 1820, in his sixty-seventh year, was he allowed to decline renomination and retire again to his estate in South Jersey. There he died in 1823, overshadowed in history by the founding fathers, to whom he was contemporary, but bound to them by his able service to the causes that had rendered them immortal.

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Carl E. Prince



AARON OGDEN (December 3, 1756-April 19, 1839), a man of impressive physique and a craggy and truculent countenance, had a character to match. To a distinguished family name he added a lustrous military service during the Revolution and a solid reputation among New Jersey lawyers.

The family had deep roots in New Jersey. John Ogden, who built a house in Elizabethtown in 1664, was one of the original settlers of that community. He moved there from Long Island, to which he had emigrated in 1640 from Hampshire, England. Aaron's father, Robert Ogden, had been speaker of the New Jersey lower house on the eve of the American Revolution. Aaron graduated from the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) in 1773. There he met many of the state's future leaders, with whom he worked and fought in the Revolution and later in the state's courts and in the political arena. In 1787 he married Elizabeth Chitwood, daughter of another prominent family, who bore him two daughters and five sons.

He capitalized on his assets to become one of New Jersey's leading Federalists