

pleased with his Government and desire it may continue during your Royall pleasure."

In spite of this assurance, Montgomerie continued to worry about the appointment of another New Jersey governor. He had, however, only a short time to fret. On July 1, 1731, after months of poor health, he died of a stroke in New York. According to historians, the people much mourned him, probably because of his good nature, modesty and eagerness to please.

Under Montgomerie's governorship, the power of the assembly continued to grow because the colonial authorities in England were ineffective and Montgomerie lacked the will and desire to check it. The crown did not disallow the hotly contested support act as the board had threatened it would. The petition for a separate governor was legitimately delivered to the crown at Montgomerie's own request. His only victory lay in the crown's disallowance of the Triennial Act, a veto he had recommended. Montgomerie must be characterized as one of the weakest of New Jersey's colonial governors.

Cadwallader Colden Papers, The New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.

Kemmerer, Donald L. *Path to Freedom: The Struggle for Self-Government in Colonial New Jersey, 1703-1776*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940.

McCreary, John R. "Ambition, Interest and Faction: Politics in New Jersey, 1702-1738." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1971.

Pomfret, John E. *Colonial New Jersey: A History*. New York: Scribner's, 1973.

Sheridan, Eugene R. "Politics in Colonial America: The Career of Lewis Morris, 1671-1740." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972.

Smith, William, Jr. *The History of the Province of New-York*. Vol. 1. *From the First Discovery to the Year 1732*. Edited by Michael Kammen. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1972.

Tanner, Edwin P. *The Province of New Jer-*

*sey, 1664-1738*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1908.

Frances D. Pingeon



WILLIAM COSBY (1690-1736) was surely New Jersey's least active governor and perhaps its most inept. The last of the colonial royal governors to hold the joint governorship of New York and New Jersey, he, like his predecessors, concentrated his efforts north of the Hudson River. He deserves mention, however, if only because he was indirectly responsible for the British government's decision in 1736 to establish a separate governorship for New Jersey.

Governor Cosby was the sixth of seven sons in an Anglo-Irish family, and the sixth to become a soldier. He entered the army in 1704, served in Flanders and Spain, and achieved a colonelcy of the Eighteenth Royal Irish in 1717. His marriage into the Montague family no doubt was hastened by the promotion. His regiment was transferred to Minorca in 1718, and for the next decade he exercised the additional responsibilities of the civil and military governorship of that little British outpost in the Mediterranean.

Cosby remains an obscure figure in the official records of Minorca, but stories of his misdeeds there became current in New York and New Jersey. The most vicious tale—about Cosby's dealings with a Portuguese merchant, Bonaventura Capedevilla—originated with Cadwallader Colden, an opponent. Cosby condemned as contraband a £9,000 cargo of snuff Capedevilla had consigned to Minorca in 1718. He cowed the local judiciary into confirming his action while refusing to allow them to investigate many of the relevant documents. He also tried to falsify some records he sent to the

Privy Council in 1722 when it investigated the affair. Colden states that the Privy Council found for Capedevilla and forced Cosby to pay £10,000 damages. "The Government of New York by the death of Coll Montgomerie came seasonably in his way to repair his broken fortune."

Colden may well have exaggerated the Capedevilla story, but later Cosby's hunger for land and his apparent ruthless intent to increase his estate were to lead many colonists to believe it. William Smith would accuse him of illicitly acquiring lands on Long Island and in the Mohawk Valley but reflect that public protestations were pointless: "No representation, repugnant to his avarice, had any influence upon Mr. Cosby. The weakness of his understanding rendered him insensible even to fear." Like almost all of the seventeenth-century and eighteenth-century British military and naval officers appointed to govern American colonies, Cosby saw the new world as a place to build a personal fortune. Further, the imperial authorities in London viewed governorships as sinecures for their friends and relatives. William Cosby was singularly well situated to be the recipient of such favoritism; neither his lack of character nor his deficiency of ability forestalled his 1732 appointment as successor to Governor Montgomerie.

The British Empire's principal administrator was the secretary of state for the Southern Department, a position held from 1724 to 1728 by the era's most accomplished manipulator of patronage, Thomas Pelham-Holles, duke of Newcastle. Colonel Cosby had direct access to Newcastle through his wife, Grace Montague, Newcastle's first cousin and the sister of the first earl of Halifax, and he flaunted his influence in America by boasting the protection of "the great interest of the Dukes of New Castle, Montague and Lord Halifax." So powerful were Cosby's connections that he, like Montgomerie, was given a choice of colonial governorships. When he was about to set sail to take the governorship of the

Leeward Islands, he learned of Montgomerie's death and returned to London so that Newcastle could secure him the more lucrative governorship on the mainland. According to one of his enemies, Cosby bluntly asserted his confidence in the strength of his patrons by rejecting an accusation that he had violated the law: "How, gentlemen, do you think I mind that: alas! I have a great interest in England." Even after his death, Newcastle and his brother Henry Pelham continued to provide for Cosby's widow and family.

Little can be said about the Cosby "administration" in New Jersey. The governor spent virtually all of this time in New York, where a combination of clumsiness on his part and emerging political maturity among the colonists created years of dangerous political factionalism.

Governor Cosby arrived at Sandy Hook in early August 1732 and held office until he died of tuberculosis in New York in March 1736. He lived in New York City, seldom traveling to New Jersey. His first trip occurred shortly after his arrival in America, when he went to Perth Amboy to request the seals of government from Lewis Morris, who, as senior New Jersey councillor, had been the acting governor since the death of Montgomerie. For some time Morris had been agitating for the establishment of a separate New Jersey governorship, a position he hoped to fill. Perhaps for this reason he delayed meeting with Cosby for an hour or more while (as he claimed) he completed a chancery decree. Cosby, incensed by the delay, subsequently identified the incident as the origin of his conflict with Morris, but in fact Cosby's New Jersey governorship began quite happily.

During his tenure Cosby met the New Jersey Assembly only once and he never called an election. In his opening speech in April 1733 he promised to spend at least half of his time in the colony (thus responding to the lively separatism issue), and the representatives responded by voting him a continuation of support

until 1738, although the existing support act still had two years to run. This may have been a response to Cosby's acquiescence when the assembly voted to issue an additional £40,000 in paper money contrary to royal policy. The governor also permitted the legislature to ratify his ordinance to fix legal fees in the colony although, strictly speaking, imperial theory considered such legislative authorization unnecessary. Cosby's only disagreement with the assembly was over an act establishing triennial elections, which the legislators periodically tried to sneak through; Cosby vetoed it.

Despite Cosby's promises, this was more or less the sum of his public record in New Jersey. He met eight times with the council but transacted little business during its sessions because he was occupied with defending his position in New York. The most famous episode of Cosby's governorship was the trial of John Peter Zenger, which in fact was related to Cosby's feud with Lewis Morris and James Alexander. Morris and his allies, who were active both in New York and New Jersey, established a paper in New York City, the *New-York Weekly Journal*, that was hostile to Cosby. Furious over the paper's sniping, Cosby suppressed it and arrested its editor, Zenger, for libel. Zenger was acquitted in what some have called a landmark case for freedom of the press; Cosby had failed to stifle criticism of his regime in New York or to remove Morris and Alexander from the council in New Jersey (which they had ceased to attend after the first meeting). Indeed, when Morris traveled to London in 1735-36 to organize a campaign for Cosby's removal, it became apparent that New Jersey had little importance except as a pawn in the politics involving New York. Morris tried to persuade the Privy Council to remove Cosby from the New York government; he failed, but to placate him the council separated the colonies and, two years after Cosby's death, made Morris governor of New Jersey.

Lewis Morris thought William Cosby a

"weak madman"; Morris was doubtless too vehement, but, alas, little good can be said about Governor Cosby of New Jersey.

Rutherford Collection, The New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.

[Colden, Cadwallader.] "Cadwallader Colden's History of Governor William Cosby's Administration and of Lieutenant Governor George Clarke's Administration Through 1737." The New-York Historical Society, *Collections* 68 (1935): 280-355.

Katz, Stanley. *Newcastle's New York: Anglo-American Politics, 1732-1753*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Kemmerer, Donald L. *Path to Freedom: The Struggle for Self Government in Colonial New Jersey, 1703-1776*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940.

McCreary, John R. "Ambition, Interest and Faction: Politics in New Jersey, 1702-1738." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1971.

Sheridan, Eugene R. *Lewis Morris, 1671-1746: A Study in Early American Politics*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1981.

Smith, William, Jr. *The History of the Province of New-York*. Vol. 2. *A Continuation, 1732-1762*. Edited by Michael Kammen. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1972.

Stanley Nider Katz



LEWIS MORRIS (October 15, 1671-May 21, 1746), colonial American political leader and jurist, served as governor of New Jersey, 1738-46.

Morris was born in New York City, the only child of Richard and Sarah (Pole) Morris, who had come to the province from Barbados the year before. After the sudden death of his parents in the summer of 1672, Morris was brought up by an elderly Quaker uncle also named Lewis