

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

route back to Philadelphia after a visit to General Washington's headquarters in New York. Distressed by the deplorable condition of the Continental army and the prospect of an imminent British invasion of New Jersey, he reluctantly advised closing the college. It was a wise decision, for within weeks royal soldiers were garrisoned in Nassau Hall.

2. The Delaware River.
3. Elias Longstreet, captain of the Eighth Company of the First Battalion of the Jersey Continental Line.
4. Jacobus Johnson of Amwell, for whose son Houston was to have served as tutor.
5. Now Pennington.
6. The battle of Princeton (see Sec. IX, Doc. 3).
7. Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson (1739-1809), commander of the New Jersey state militia.
8. In Vealtown, now Bernardsville.
9. Now Riverdale.

4 Governor William Livingston to Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson

[Neilson Family Papers, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.]

The retreat of the Continental army before the British advance through the state brought the war to New Jersey in the final months of 1776. To meet the military emergency, the legislature on November 27 passed a law attaching four battalions of militia to General Washington's command. And in the afterglow of the surprise victory at Trenton, Washington on December 31 issued a proclamation "To the Friends of America in the State of New Jersey" which called upon the militia to turn out to drive the British from the state. But as the terse order below indicates, not all militiamen enthusiastically rallied to repel the enemy. Indeed, throughout the war Brigadier General Dickinson, commander in chief of the state's militia, complained about the performance of the citizen-soldiers. As the conflict dragged on, war-weariness and disillusionment accounted for much of the unresponsiveness of the militia. But in the early months of the war, men often were reluctant to leave their families unprotected and commit themselves to a cause that seemed hopeless (see Sec. XI, Doc. 2).

January 14, 1777

Sir,

Though many of the Militia of New Jersey during the present Invasion of this

X CITIZEN SOLDIERS

State by the Troops of his Britannic Majesty have readily obeyed the Orders of their Commander in Chief to join the Army under the Command of his Excellency General Washington; yet a considerable number of them regardless of the Freedom of America, and of their Duty to their Country have hitherto disobeyed the most express orders for joining the said Army to repel the said Invasion and still continue at their respective places of abode when their Country so loudly calls upon them to join the Troops of the United States now in New Jersey. You are therefore hereby authorized to compel all such Delinquents immediately to join the said Army and to continue in the Service, in this State, until they shall be regularly discharged.

5 A Woman in Arms

[*Pennsylvania Journal; and the Weekly Advertiser*, April 2, 1777.]

Although neither the identity of the woman mentioned in the article below nor independent confirmation of her achievement has come to light, there is little reason to doubt the essential veracity of the incident. Many Jersey women were willing and able to shoulder arms if necessary, and during the first quarter of 1777 numerous Hesse and Ansbach soldiers were cantoned throughout the Raritan Valley east of New Brunswick.

[March 20th, 1777]

From New Jersey we learn, that on or about the 20th ult. a woman passing an evacuated house in Woodbridge, saw, through the window, a drunken Hessian soldier, who had straggled from his party; there being no men within less than a mile of the town, she went home, dressed herself in man's apparel, and armed with an old firelock, returned to the house, entered it, and took the Hessian prisoner, whom she stripped of his arms, and was leading off, when she fell in with the patrol guard of a New-Jersey regiment, stationed near Woodbridge, to whom she delivered her prisoner.

6 Colonel Elijah Hand to Colonel Charles Mawhood

[*PNJHS*, ser. 1, (1858), 8:100-1.]