

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 20?, 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.]

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Throughout February and into March 1778, competing British and American foraging parties in search of livestock and provisions cut a swath of devastation through southwest Jersey. On March 17 a British force commanded by Colonel Charles Mawhood, who had participated in the battle of Princeton and who had a low opinion of the militiamen, landed near Salem to gather supplies. Although largely uncontested, Mawhood ambushed a small detachment of militia at Quinton's Bridge and massacred a sleeping outpost at Hancock's Bridge on March 20. The next day, "induced by Motives of Humanity," he called upon the remaining militia in the area to disband. If they complied, he promised to depart "without Delay" and pay for the cattle and grain taken; if they refused, he threatened to arm local Tories and "attack all such of the Militia as remain in Arms, burn and destroy their Houses and other Property, and reduce them, their unfortunate Wives and Children, to Beggary and Distress." As the extraordinary response from Elijah Hand, colonel of the Cumberland Militia, reveals, Mawhood greatly underestimated the courage and resolve of the citizenry. His proved to be an idle threat; Mawhood and his men left the region without further incident.

Head Quarters, at Quinton's Bridge, March 22d, 1778

Sir

I have been favored with what you say Humanity has induced you to propose. It would have given me much Pleasure to have found that Humanity had been the Line of Conduct to your Troops since you have come to Salem. Not only denying Quarters, but butchering our Men, who surrendered themselves Prisoners in the Skirmish at Quinton's Bridge, last Thursday, and bayonetting yesterday morning at Hancock's Bridge, in the most cruel Manner, in cold Blood, Men who were taken by Surprise, in a situation in which they neither could nor did attempt to make any Resistance, and some of whom were not fighting Men, are Instances too shocking for me to relate and I hope for you to hear. The brave are ever generous and humane. After expressing your Sentiments of Humanity, you proceed to make a Request, which I think you would despise us if we complied with. Your Proposal, that we should lay down our Arms, we absolutely reject. We have taken them up to maintain Rights, which are dearer to us than our Lives, and will not lay them down till either Success has crowned our Cause with Victory, or like many ancient Worthies contending for Liberty, we meet with an honorable Death. You mention, that, if we reject your Proposal, you will put Arms into the Hands of the Tories against us. We have no Objection to the Measure, for it would be a very good one to fill our Arsenals with Arms. Your Threat to wantonly burn and destroy our Houses and other Property and reduce our Wives and Children to Beggary and Distress, is a Sentiment, which my Humanity almost forbids me only to recite, and induces me to imagine that I am reading the cruel order of a barbarous Attila, and not of a Gentleman brave, generous and polished with a genteel European Education. To wantonly destroy will injure your Cause more than ours. It will increase your Enemies and our Army. To destine to Destruction the Property of our most distinguished Men, as you have done in your Proposals, is in my Opinion unworthy a generous Foe, and more like a rancorous Feud between two contending Barons, than a War carried on by one of the

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greatest Powers on Earth against a People nobly struggling for Liberty. A Line of Honour would mark out, that these Men should share the Fate of their Country. If your Arms should be crowned with victory, which God forbid, they and their Property will be entirely at the Disposal of your Sovereign. The Loss of their Property, while their Persons are out of your Power, will only make them desperate, and, as I said before, increase your Foes and our Army; and Retaliation upon Tories and their Property is not entirely out of our Power. Be assured that these are the Sentiments and determined Resolution not only of myself, but of all the Officers and Privates under me. My Prayer is, Sir, that this Answer may reach you in good Health and great Happiness.

ELIJAH HAND, Colonel.

7 Colonel Joseph Ellis to Governor William Livingston

[George Washington Papers, ser. 4, reel 48, Presidential Papers Microfilm Series (Library of Congress).]

An alarm went out in the early months of 1778 for the militia to rise and resist the incursions of British foraging parties roaming through southwest Jersey. With few exceptions (see Doc. 6), the response was at best disappointing. In the letter that follows, Colonel Joseph Ellis of Gloucester County, who had replaced the slothful Silas Newcomb as commander of the southern militia in January, describes the poor turnout of troops to repel the invaders. The account is not atypical. Throughout the war the commanders of the state militia were frustrated by the erratic behavior of their men and the inadequacy of regulations governing the units.

Haddonfield 23d March 1778

Sir

I received yours of the 21st. Instant & hope the Militia of Hunterdon & Sussex will turn out well, as there cannot be greater Occasion for them than at present. I have repeatedly call'd on the Col[one]ls at Burlington but without Effect: not a single man of them appears, nor do I hear there is any motion of the kind among them. We can get but very few from Salem or Cumberland as they plead the Necessity of guarding their own Coast which I think not unreasonable.¹ Gloucester of late is little better, they being discouraged at the Weakness of the Post in part, & partly for want of their Pay, which with some Companys is several months in Arrear. Col[one]l: Otto's² Battalion have chiefly revolted to the Enemy & have made Prisoners of a Number of their Officers, those who have eskaped dare not stay at their Homes; Col[onel]: Somer's³ Battalion upon the last call for two Classes have not sent