

XI GOVERNMENT AT WAR

Penn, who is now with the enemy. Of this the Board of War must have been entirely ignorant, otherwise they would not have made such an order of removal. And we are willing to ascribe it to the hurry and multiplicity of their business, that either the honorable the Congress, or the Board of War, should have selected any part of New Jersey as a prison for mal-contents, without first notifying the same to the executive power of the state. Nor can we persuade ourselves that they will have any objection against our removing the before-mentioned prisoners out of this state, to such other parts of the country as Congress may think most fit for their safety, or, if they must remain in this state, to leave it to our direction in what particular locality, they are likely to do the least mischief.

I am your ob't and hum. ser't,
WILL: LIVINGSTON

1. John Penn, lieutenant governor of Pennsylvania 1763-1771 and 1773-1776. Despite his Loyalism, Penn returned to his native state after the war.
2. Benjamin Chew was arrested after refusing to sign a parole confining him to his home. He returned to Pennsylvania after the war and resumed his judicial career as president of the High Court of Errors and Appeals.
3. The Union Iron Works near Amwell was used as a prison during the war.
4. The Board of War, created as "A Board of War and Ordinance" in June 1776, supervised military affairs for the Congress.
5. John Allen, owner of the Union Iron Works. Allen had been a member of the Provincial Congress in 1775.

8 The Magistrates of Trenton to General George Washington

[George Washington Papers, ser. 4, reel 46, Presidential Papers Microfilm Series (Library of Congress).]

The burdens imposed by bivouacking soldiers fell most heavily upon local governmental officials. Morristown, site of Washington's winter encampments in 1777 and 1779-1780, and the strategically located towns of Elizabethtown, New Brunswick, and Trenton were especially inconvenienced by troop concentrations. But few communities along the central corridor from New York City to Philadelphia went long without hosting a military detachment. As the appeal from Trenton magistrates to General Washington reveals, communities wanted the army nearby for protection, but not so near as to cause overcrowding,

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shortages of provisions, and the likelihood of civilian-military disturbances (see Doc. 12).

Trenton, January 2, 1778

Sir,

Having with much Concern been informed that four Regiments of the Light Dragoons¹ of the Army are ordered to be quartered in this Town for the Winter for the Purpose of recruiting, and to be exempt from Duty; and apprehending that, if our Information be true, Your Excellency must have been greatly misinformed respecting the present State and Condition of the Town and the adjacent Country, we, some of the Magistrates of the Town and Neighbourhood of Trenton, conceive it to be our Duty, as well with Respect to the Publick Service, as to the Convenience and Safety of the Inhabitants, to submit to your Consideration the following Facts; from which we doubt not it will appear that the Quartering any considerable Number of Horse² in this Town, especially for this Purpose of recruiting, would not be so likely to answer the End proposed as might be expected in many other Places, and that it would at the same Time, be very distressing to all, and absolutely ruinous to many of the Inhabitants.

1. A Number of Horse quartered here, not being on Duty, could afford no Protection to this Country; and at the same Time might be a Temptation to the Enemy to make an Invasion on a Place so near them, which otherwise might not afford them an Object of sufficient Importance.³

2. The Town, and especially the Stabling and Out-Houses, suffered so much Injury by the Ravages of the Enemy last Winter,⁴ and other Events of the War, that it is yet greatly out of repair, and from the Scarcity of Materials and Workmen is likely to continue so for some Time to come; insomuch that it is with some Difficulty the Horses and Cattle of the Inhabitants are sheltered from the Weather: And should any considerable Number of Horses be quartered in the Town, they must either want Stabling or the Horses of the Inhabitants must be turned out to make Room for them.

3. From the great Number of Waggons and Horses employed in & about this Town for several Months past in the Publick Service, this neighbouring Country has been so much drained of it's Forage that it is very difficult to get a sufficient Supply for the Teams now necessarily employed in and daily passing through this Town. Many of the Inhabitants have not got, nor are able to get an adequate Supply for their own Stock; the Country for ten Miles round and upwards being so much exhausted, that although the Horses and Cattle within that Circumference are far less numerous than usual, the Forage remaining will afford them a very scanty Subsistence for the Winter. At the same Time the Inhabitants of the Town are obliged to keep more Horses than they otherwise would for the Purpose of collecting Fire Wood, the Country Teams being so much employed in the Publick Service that they cannot be procured for this Purpose. And moreover the local Situation of Trenton renders it so necessary a Post, and so much a Thoroughfare, that many Teams as well as Travellers in the Publick Employ necessarily depend on finding temporary Supplies in it.

4. The Legislature of the State are to meet at Trenton early in the Month of

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February, and, from the Causes beforementioned, it will be with great Difficulty that tolerable Provision can be made for them and their Horses. If but a single Regiment of Dragoons should be placed here, it will be impossible, and there is not another Town in the State, equally remote from the Enemy, now in a Condition to afford them suitable Accomodations and Conveniences for doing Business. In their late Session at Princeton the Publick Business was much obstructed for want of proper Accomodations and Conveniences, and at length, we are well informed, it ended, leaving several important Matters unfinished, which would otherwise probably have been completed.

We therefore flatter ourselves that Your Excellency, having taken these Circumstances into Consideration, will be of Opinion that Trenton is an improper Place for the Repose of the Horse for the Winter, and that you will be pleased to order them elsewhere. We are anxiously desirous, and we have Reason to believe the People of this County in general, especially in the Neighbourhood of Trenton, are well disposed to farther the Operations of the Army by every Effort that can be reasonably expected from good Citizens. The Inhabitants in and near this Town, from their local Situation and other Circumstances, have already felt the Calamities of War in a Degree unknown to most other Parts of America.

And the known Benevolence of Your Excellency's Disposition prompts us to hope that we shall not be subjected to any new Distresses unnecessarily.

We are, with the greatest Respect, Your Excellency's

most obedient,

humble Servants

WM. CLEAYTON

BENJAMIN YARD

RENSSALAER WILLIAMS

BENJAMIN VANCLEAVE

1. That is, light cavalry.
2. Cavalry was commonly referred to as "horse" for obvious reasons.
3. The British army occupied Philadelphia from September 1777 to June 1778.
4. The battle of Trenton. See Sec. IX, Doc. 2.

9 Residents of Cape May to Governor William Livingston

[Miscellaneous Manuscript Collection, New Jersey State Library.]