

## XI GOVERNMENT AT WAR

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.]

## NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

One of the most perplexing problems plaguing Governor William Livingston as commander in chief of the state militia was the localism of the people of New Jersey. Militiamen would turnout to defend their immediate locale, but were reluctant to serve outside the county or in another state. Time and again, as during the British invasion of Bergen County in November 1776 and the assault on Fort Mercer a year later, the failure of the militia to appear had serious military consequences (see Sec. X, Docs. 4 and 7). Frightened by inadequate protection and generally unconcerned about distant warfare, the civilian population encouraged a parochial perspective in the citizen-soldiers. As the following petition from residents of rural, sparsely populated Cape May County to Livingston illustrates, support of the common cause was often tempered by local needs and interests.

10th March 1778

The Petition of Sundry the Inhabitants of Cape May County, Humbly Sheweth,

That your Petitioners, from their Local situation, are greatly exposed to the incursions of their Enemies, who from their Ships, and Vessels of War, have landed and often attempted to Land;<sup>1</sup> whereby the inhabitants more contiguous to the shore might have been robbed of their property, had not the Militia interposed for their relief.

That your Petitioners are very apprehensive, as the Season is now advancing, in which they can cruize a long our Coast, without much danger from the inclemency of the weather; that they will again infest our shores and do all the mischief in their power: And the many threats, repeatedly uttered by the enemy, that they will destroy our Salt-works,<sup>2</sup> burn our houses, and plunder the Country; all tend, further to confirm us, in our apprehensions of danger.

That the whole of the Militia in a collective body, are but few, and when one fourth part of those few, is on duty abroad,<sup>3</sup> our condition is really weak and dangerous; especially as we cannot speedily obtain assistance, from the adjacent counties.

Your Petitioners do therefore humbly request that it may please your Excellency, to take the premisses under your consideration, and exempt the Militia of Cape May, from performing their Tour of duty abroad; and to point out such methods, as may enable the inhabitants to keep up a regular guard, or any other measure, your Excellency may think most conducive to our safety.

And your Petitioners as in duty  
bound shall ever Pray.

[Seventy-four signatures affixed.]

1. Cape May was an inviting target for foraging parties because of the livestock—estimated by the Continental army in May 1777 at 30,000 cattle and nearly as many sheep—that roamed the marshlands and thinly wooded pine forests of the county.

2. During the war numerous evaporation vats were built along the coast

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to extract salt from seawater.

3. "Abroad" means duty outside the county with the state militia. The state militia, comprised of volunteers drawn on a quota basis from the various county militias, was liable for service anywhere in New Jersey and the surrounding states.

### 10 Samuel Allinson to Governor William Livingston

[Letter Book, Allinson Papers, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.]

Members of the Society of Friends, especially numerous in West Jersey from Burlington to Cumberland Counties and in portions of the East Jersey counties of Middlesex and Monmouth, posed a particularly sensitive problem to the government of New Jersey during the Revolution. Prior to 1776 Quakers suffered considerable harassment because of their refusal to participate in the violent protest against British imperial policies (see Sec. IV, Doc. 3). Things got even worse after independence was declared: many rebels thought they saw manifestations of Loyalism in the Friends' condemnation of compulsory military service, disinclination to swear allegiance to the revolutionary government, and refusal to bear arms or to pay fines for failure to do so. Quakers, like the Seventh Day Baptists who had similar religious scruples, were subjected to considerable abuse during the war because they were distrusted by both British and American forces and because their pacifism often provoked soldiers to commit extraordinary depredations. As political pressures and physical abuses increased, Burlington lawyer Samuel Allinson wrote a lengthy appeal to Governor William Livingston outlining the Quaker position and indirectly raising the thorny issue of the rights of neutrals and conscientious objectors during wartime. His appeal was unsuccessful (see Doc. 11); it was not until after the termination of hostilities in 1783 that Quakers began to regain their former positions of prominence in the state of New Jersey.

7th Mo: 13th 1778

Respected Friend

... Whether the governm[en]t of G[rea]t Britain over these Colonies shall ever more take place, I pretend not to determine; & tho one of a Society which some have thought too much that way attached, cannot say I wish it. I believe it to be my duty to live a sober, industrious & religious life, under whatever Government my lot is cast, the question is therefore not so material to me, since, by religious principles I am restrained from taking part in the contest or advancing one side or the other;