

## NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Europe, or to compel Obedience to her Laws by a Military Force. The Necessity for either it was hoped, by all good Men, that the Congress would have prevented, by framing and proposing some Plan of Constitutional Union, which, though it might not have been deemed perfect, or such as the Mother Country could altogether have acquiesced in, yet might have served as a Foundation for an amicable Settlement of our unhappy Differences. But, tho' a Plan for that Purpose was proposed by a Member of the Congress, and even entered on their Minutes, with an Order referring it to further Consideration, yet they not only refused to resume the Consideration of it, but directed both the Plan and Order to be erased from their Minutes, so that no Vestige of it might appear there.<sup>2</sup> I have, however, obtained a Copy of it, which I send enclosed to your Lordship, as I am told it has been much handed about at New York, and greatly approved of by some of the most sensible Men in that City.

I have the Honour to be, with the greatest Respect & Regard,  
My Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient & most humble Servant  
WM. FRANKLIN

1. Franklin is referring to the presence of the British army at Boston; actually the military afforded scant protection to the Massachusetts government since the troops could not be used to suppress civil disorders without the approval of the radical-dominated legislature.

2. Joseph Galloway's "Plan of a Proposed Union between Great Britain and the Colonies" was defeated on September 28 when a motion to defer consideration of the proposal passed by a vote of six colonies to five. Outraged first by the defeat of his plan and then by its omission from the congressional journals, Galloway, a prominent Pennsylvania lawyer and a close personal friend of Governor Franklin, published his scheme for colonial governance in pamphlet form for popular distribution.

### 14 The Cumberland County Committee Proceedings on the Greenwich Tea Party

[*Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet; or, the General Advertiser*, January 9, 1775.]

New Jersey was the scene of several "tea parties" in 1774. In January and again in June students of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University) committed quantities of the baneful leaf, everywhere a symbol of British oppression, to bonfires. But the most famous conflagration occurred in the small Cumberland County village of Greenwich. In mid-December Captain Allen's brig

### III THE COMMON CAUSE

*Greyhound* entered Delaware Bay bound for Philadelphia with a shipment of tea from Rotterdam. For reasons unknown (perhaps he was forewarned of the hostile climate of the Quaker city), Allen put into the Cohansey River and dropped anchor off Greenwich. The controversial cargo was clandestinely unloaded and stored in the cellar of Daniel Bowen's "store-house" for safekeeping. The account that follows describes the fate of the tea and the reaction of the community.

[December 22-23, 1774]

At a general meeting of the inhabitants of the county of Cumberland, in New-Jersey held at Bridge-town, on Thursday, the 22d day of December, 1774.

The articles of the Association entered into by the American Continental Congress being publickly read, were unanimously approved of; whereupon it was resolved, that a committee of thirty-five persons be appointed to carry the same into execution throughout the county; accordingly the following persons were chosen, viz.: Abraham Jones, Thomas Maskell, Ephraim Harris, Silas Newcomb, Ephraim Seely, Daniel Elmore, Jonathan Ayres, Elijah Hand, David Bowen, and Joshua Brick, Esquires; Messieurs John Wheaton, Benjamin Mulford, Abijah Holmes, Thomas Brown, Joel Fithian, Daniel Maskell, John Gibbon, Michael Hoshell, Thomas Daniel, Jonathan Smith, William Aul, Joseph Sheppard, Isaac Preston, Samuel Leek, Mark Ryley, John Buck, Ezekiel Foster, Joseph Newcomb, Jonathan Lore, John Terry, Gideon Heaton, Richard Wood, Joshua Ewing, John Laning, and Thomas Ewing.

As soon as the committee were chosen, they were publickly informed, that a quantity of Tea had been secretly landed at Greenwich, and that the inhabitants of that town had taken the alarm, and had chosen a *pro tempore* committee of five persons, to take care of the same until the committee of the county was chosen; the general committee then withdrew, in order to consider what should be done in the affair, and came into the following resolution, namely, That this Committee, being ignorant of the principles on which the said tea was imported, or whence it came, and not being able to get information thereof, by reason of the importer's absence, do think it best to have it privately stored, and agree to meet at ten o'clock tomorrow, in order to take care of the same. Accordingly they met the next day agreeable to appointment, and found to their surprize that the tea had been destroyed, by persons unknown, the night before, at the time the committee were sitting at Bridgetown;<sup>1</sup> whereupon the committee further entered into the resolves following:

I. That we entirely disapprove of the destroying the abovementioned tea, it being entirely contrary to our resolves.

II. That we will not conceal, nor protect from justice, any of the perpetrators of the above fact.<sup>2</sup>

Extract from the minutes of the Committee,

THOMAS EWING,<sup>3</sup> Clerk

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1. The Reverend Philip Vickers Fithian (see Sec. V, Doc. 12, headnote), an eyewitness to the tea burning, made the following notation in his diary for Friday, December 23: "Last night the Tea was, by a number of persons in disguise, taken out of the House & consumed with fire. Violent, & different are the words about this uncommon Manoeuvre, among the Inhabitants. Some rave, some curse & condemn, some try to reason; many are glad the Tea is destroyed, but almost all disapprove the Manner of the destruction." Robert G. Albion and Leonidas Dodson, eds., *Philip Vickers Fithian: Journal, 1774-1776* (Princeton, 1934), p. 248.

2. Those responsible for the destruction of the tea did in fact escape prosecution. A civil suit to recover damages filed against seven individuals by the owners of the tea dragged on in the courts until the outbreak of the Revolution precluded its completion. And, although the identity of the tea burners was common knowledge in Cumberland County, it proved impossible to secure a criminal indictment from the local grand jury.

3. Thomas Ewing (1748-1782), Greenwich physician.

### 15 "A Freeholder" to the Essex County Committee

[*Rivington's New-York Gazetteer* . . . , January 5, 1775.]

Whereas some Jerseymen were disturbed by the general recommendations of the Continental Congress, others were more concerned about the unqualified latitude given local committees of inspection and observation to enforce the provisions of the Association. The sweeping power of these local vigilante groups, which operated without legal sanction and without regard for due process, was a distinct threat to the civil liberties of the citizenry. As "A Freeholder" recognized, the popular front embodied the paradoxes of liberality and illiberality, freedom and constraint; as the resistance movement gathered momentum, many people began to wonder wherein lay the most serious threat to freedom—the actions of the British or of local radicals.

[January 5, 1775]

Gentlemen,<sup>1</sup>

Your notice to the Freeholders of Essex, of the 28th of November, was conveyed to me by Holt's paper of Thursday last,<sup>2</sup> and as your motive for convening us is declared to be, in conformity to the *wise* and *prudent* resolves of the Congress, of which I had before heard, I determine to read their resolves with the greatest attention, and therefore sent Tom, with my best horse, who soon brought me the extracts of the proceedings of the Congress. I eagerly sat down to read them, but,