

9 Enforcement of the Association in Sussex County

[Minutes of the Sussex County Committee, Revolutionary Era Manuscripts, 4, New Jersey Historical Society.]

The dedication of local committeemen and the thoroughness with which they dispatched their duties contributed to the remarkable rapidity with which the Provincial Association (see Doc. 1) was implemented in New Jersey. Signing the Association was an important political act, for it not only signified at least tacit approval of the program of the popular front but also committed people nominally to the rebellion and made it difficult to retreat at a later date. It was during the summer and fall of 1775 that many Jerseymen made a fundamental decision to support the revolt, and the instrument of that conversion was the Association.

August 10-11, 1775

The Committee of the County of Sussex, having met at the Court House of the said County on the tenth of August 1775 pursuant to Adjournment. . . .

Moved by Mr. Symmes,¹ That the members present be Called upon to declare if they had Signed the Association,² Seconded by Mr. Archibald Stewart³ [torn]. The Members being Called upon, did all Except [torn] they had Signed; & these Six being required did in this meeting Sign the s[ai]d Association.

The Committees of the Respective Towns being Called upon, for a Return of non-Signers of the Association in their Respective Towns Ret[ur]ned as follows: Greenwich—John Paterson—a Quaker Says tis against his Conscience as tis a matter of Blood Shedding

Owen Phillips—no reason	
William Phillips	} Quakers, will not take up arms being against their Conscience
Isaac Phillips	
William Phillips, Junr.	
Aaron Prall	
Joseph Prall	} will take time to Consider
Mansfield—George Marlatt	
Coonrad Phillips	} no reason given

Wantage—all Signed, Except Joseph Havens & one or two more Quakers who are Whigs, & are willing to Contribute

Sandiston—all Signed, Except two, Who are willing when Opportunity Offers

Montague—all Signed

The other Towns⁴ having not had the Association Particularly Carried to the Inhabitants, Ordered that the Committees of said Towns Wait upon the People &c. & make Return at next meeting of this Committee. . . .

Motion made by Mr. Symmes, THAT WHEREAS there are Some men [torn] having Signed the Association, have Basely Turned their [torn] Sacred Cause of

V FROM RESISTANCE TO REBELLION

Liberty, & Vilely Aspers'd her True Sons, And Wickedly Endeavoured and do still endeavour to Sew Sedition & Create Confusion, and fill the minds of the Good People of the County with groundless fear and Jealousys to the Great Detrument of the Public Cause, That therefore this Board take the Same under Consideration.

Resolved, Nem: Con: that if any Person or Persons in any of the Towns in this County, Shall hereafter Asperse any of the friends of Liberty in this County on Account of their Political Sentiments or Shall speak Contemptuously or Disrespectfully of the Continental or Provincial Congresses or of any of the Committees of and in this County or any measures Adopted or Appointed to be pursued by the Congresses or Committees for the Public good & Safety on Complaint being made thereof to any one of the Committee of the Town where such Person Shall reside, The Chairman Shall with the Consent of the majority of said Committee at the next meeting Issue an Order to the Captain of the next Company of Militia to send a party of five or six men of his Company to take Such Offender or Offenders & forthwith bring him or them before the said Committee & if the said Offender or Offenders on proof being made of the fact laid to his or their Charge, Shall refuse to retract & Express Sorrow & Contrition for his or their Offences & will not promise [torn] comment in future, The s[ai]d Chairman Shall a Day [torn] the next meeting of the County Committee Direct [said Militia Captain?] to Send a party of his men as aforesaid to [seize the offender?] or Offenders and bring him or them forthwith before the said County Committee to be there dealt with according to his or their Deserts. . . .

Mr. Anderson⁵ moved, That it be recommended to the Committee of Knowlton to get the Association in their Town Signed as Speedily as Possible & to Suppress any Riot there in its infancy as Threats of a Riot from that Town have been Reported. Resolved, Nem. Con. . . .

The Committee Adjourned till the 5th of October next at 10 O'Clock then to meet at the Court House, or Sooner if Summon'd by the Chairman⁶ on any Emergency.

GOD SAVE THE CONGRESS
THOMAS ANDERSON, CLK. COM.

1. John Cleves Symmes (1742-1814), Walpack lawyer, who later served as a member of the Provincial Congress (1776), the Legislative Council (1776-1777, 1780-1785), and the Confederation Congress (1785-1786). He was also a colonel in the Sussex Militia (1775-1777) and associate justice of the state supreme court (1777-1783).

2. See Doc. 1.

3. Stewart was a Newton farmer.

4. Hardiston, Hardwick, Knowlton, Newton, Oxford, and Walpack were the other townships.

5. Thomas Anderson (1743-1805), Newton lawyer, was acting clerk of the county from 1770 to 1777.

6. The committee chairman was William Maxwell (1733-1796) of Greenwich. Having become a career officer in the British army after the French and Indian War, Maxwell resigned his commission in 1774 to enlist in the American struggle against the British; he served with distinction as a brigadier general during the war.