

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Hankinson & Jacob Wikoff Esqrs., Commissioners, duly appointed for the said County, on the Part and Behalf of the said State, do take and dispose of, for the Use and Benefit of the same, the Estates of certain Fugitives and Offenders in the said County, or to any two or more of them, Greeting:

Whereas lately, that is to say, of the Term of *April* in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy *Nine*, in the Court of Common-Pleas held at *Freehold* in and for the said County of *Monmouth* before the Judges of the same Court, final Judgment was had and entered in Favour of the said State of New-Jersey, pursuant to Law, against *Joseph Leonard* late of *the Township of Middletown* on an Inquisition found against the said *Joseph Leonard* for *joining the Army of the King of Great Britain and otherwise offending against the form of his Allegiance to the said State &c.* and returned to the said Court, as may fully appear of Record: You are therefore commanded and enjoined to sell and dispose of all the Estate Real, of what Nature or Kind soever, belonging, or lately belonging to the said *Joseph Leonard* within the said County of *Monmouth* according to the Directions of an Act for forfeiting to, and vesting in, the State of New-Jersey, the Real Estates of certain Fugitives and Offenders, made and passed the eleventh Day of December, in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy-eight.²

Witness *John Anderson Esqr.* Judge of the said Court, at *Freehold Af[ore]s[ai]d* the *twenty ninth* Day of *April* in the Year of our Lord, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy *nine*.

By the Court,
*ANDERSON Cl[er]k*³

1. The writ was a printed form which provided space for court officials to fill in data concerning individual cases; italics have been used here to indicate handwritten information.

2. The May 5, 1779, issue of the *New-Jersey Gazette* carried an announcement dated May 3 notifying the public that the personalty and realty of Joseph Leonard and other convicted Loyalists would be sold at vendue at the house of Cornelius Swort in Middletown on June 28 at 10 a.m. On February 23, 1780, the *Gazette* ran another notice, dated February 21, which announced that "a small farm" belonging to Leonard would be auctioned at the home of Daniel Randolph in Freehold at 9 a.m. on March 28.

3. Kenneth Anderson, Jr.

12 Samuel Ryerse to George Ryerse

[Ryerson Family Papers, Alexander Library, Rutgers University.]

The attention lavished upon those who fought for American independence

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(see Sec. X) has generally obscured the equally brave and determined individuals who took up arms in support of the crown. Representative of these unsung soldiers is Samuel Ryerse (1752-1812), who not only retained the traditional Dutch spelling of the family name in preference to the Anglicized "Ryerson" but also defended the old royalist regime against the republican challenge. As a member of the Fourth New Jersey Volunteers (a unit that often ranged far from home to do battle with the rebels), Samuel Ryerse saw action in one of the most important campaigns of the war. Hoping to break what was beginning to be a military stalemate, the British in 1778 devised a new strategy. The plan was to concentrate on conquering the southern states (where Loyalist sentiment was most prevalent) as a prelude to a systematic advance upon the more rebellious northern states. Savannah fell in December 1778, and in early 1780 the major British offensive in the South got underway. In the following letter to his half-brother, George L. Ryerse (1742-1782), a Bergen County farmer near Pacquanock who suffered considerable property loss during the war, Captain Ryerse recounts his involvement in one of the decisive battles of the war.

New York 19th May 1781

Dear Brother

I with Pleasure Imbrace This oppertunity To inform You That I am Returned From the Southard where in the Coars of the last Sixteen Months I had the Pleasure To See the Reduction of Charlstown with That of the Province.¹ I Then Marcht under the Command of Major Ferguson For the Back Part of North Carolina.² We had Several Battles Dureing the Summer Season in which we Always Proved Victorious Till the 7th of October³ when we were Atacked By Near Five times our Number⁴ and after an Action of 1 [h]our and Five Minutes we were all Either kild wounded or Taken. I was wounded in the Beginning of the Action Through the left hand and Rist in the Beginning of The Action By which Means I lost the Ring Finger and in a great Measure the use of My hand Though it Did not hinder Me From keping the Field.⁵ Major Ferguson was kild and Near 300 loyal Malitia and as Many More wounded. Out of 70 of our New Core Regulars There was only 19 That was not hurt. We Charged Throug Them Several Times But a[t] last was Forst to give up To Superior Numbers and the want of Amunition. The Rebels loss in kild and wounded was Far More Than ours as Dureing the First of the Action we was under Cover and They Exposed To our Fire. I am Sory To Inform You That Leut. Ryerse⁶ Died the 7th of February at Savanah the Day after we landed, after 32 Days Sickness of a Nervis Complaint and I Believ Accationed in a great Measure By Sea Sickness. He had all The Attention Paid him By Doctor Johnson who is a very good Surgon That was in his Power to Do in That Situation. This I am Sure Must Affect unkle and aunt⁷ Much and I am Afraid will Soon Bring Their gray hairs to The grave, as he was a Promising youth and would have Bin an honour to The Family and all his Relations. The loss of him here is Cinclearly Regretd By Every One That had the honour of Being Acquainted with him. I had him Buryed in Savanah with the honours of war. Paid the Doctors Bill and Burial Charges. His Baggage with Part of Mine I left in Savanah. I got it from there last March where it is almost all Spoilt Mildued and Moth Eaton & wish to have Some Directions about it. My Brother Joseph⁸ is

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Recommended for an Enseigns In the Prince of Waleses Regmt. I wish To hear From You and Family, uncle and aunt and Family, and all the Rest of My Friends and Relations in Your Part of The Cuntry and My Brother John⁹ if You have heard From him. Give My Best Compliments with those of Mrs. Ryerse To uncle and aunt, your Family and all other Friends. Except of the Same From your Ever loving Brother

SAML. RYERSE

N. B. Betsey¹⁰ is a fine girl. She gose to Scool and learns fast. I have another in her¹¹ Novr. the Month. We are all well. As for News I Dare not write For Fear you Should get in Trouble About it all. Our Friends on This Side of the water are wel and in the Corese of another Campaign. Hope to Drive the Rebels out of the Cuntry or Make Them own George¹² Their Master.

1. Charleston, key to the region as well as the state, fell on May 12, 1780, to a British expeditionary force led personally by commander in chief General Sir Henry Clinton.

2. After the capture of Charleston, the British army under Charles, Lord Cornwallis, set in motion the ambitious campaign to conquer the South. One of the most effective units initially was the 4,000 Loyalist militia and volunteers led by the Scotsman Patrick Ferguson, major of the Seventy-first Highlanders and inventor of the first breech-loading rifle used in the British army.

3. After a series of impressive victories during the summer of 1780, the British in September encountered increasingly stubborn resistance in the back country. By early October a group of some 500 "over-mountain" frontiersmen from present-day east Tennessee under Colonels Isaac Shelby and John Sevier had joined militiamen from the Carolinas and neighboring states for the purpose of attacking Ferguson, who, operating independently from Cornwallis, had placed himself in an exposed and isolated position. Ferguson underestimated the seriousness of the threat and inexplicably assumed a disadvantageous defensive position atop King's Mountain near the northern border of South Carolina. Taking advantage of heavy cover, the Americans administered a devastating defeat to Ferguson's forces on October 7. In heavy fighting the rebels lost 28 killed and 64 wounded, while the royalists suffered 157 dead (including Ferguson), 163 seriously wounded, and 698 taken prisoner. The American victory at King's Mountain proved pivotal, for it not only blunted the British offensive in the South but also set in motion events that led to Cornwallis's retreat to Yorktown and eventual surrender to Washington a year later.

4. Actually the contending armies were of nearly equal size. Ferguson had approximately 1,000 men, including about 200 foragers; while the strength of the rebel army has been estimated variously from 1,500-1,800, only about 900 actually participated in the action on the seventh.

5. Taken prisoner, Ryerse was confined at Charleston until his parole and exchange in February 1781.

6. His cousin, twenty-one-year-old Lieutenant Martin Ryerse of the Fourth New Jersey Volunteers (Loyalist), who probably died of malaria.

7. Joris and Maria Du Bois Ryerse, Martin's parents.

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8. Joseph Ryerse (1761-1854), joined the British army as a cadet in 1776 and soon gained fame as a daring and successful courier. He removed to Canada in 1784 and fought again against the United States in the War of 1812.

9. John Ryerse (1756-1814), Bergen County farmer.

10. His daughter Elizabeth.

11. That is, his wife, whose name is unknown, was expecting a child in November.

12. King George III.

13 Governor William Livingston to Robert Livingston

[Livingston-Redmond Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.]

Throughout the war Governor William Livingston was besieged with requests to issue passports which would enable New Jersey Loyalist refugees to visit the state. The problem, compounded by the proximity of British-occupied New York City, intensified as the prospect of peace increased and lukewarm royalists wished to return home. But Livingston, who despised those maintaining allegiance to the crown, hewed a hard line. In February 1782 he rejected an attempt by his wife to intercede on behalf of a prodigal Jerseyman, and two months later denied the request of his brother Robert, third lord of the Lower Manor or Clermont section of Livingston Manor, that Philip Schuyler, who had taken refuge in New York City, be allowed to return to Bergen County. In the letter that follows, Governor Livingston stresses his desire to avoid precedents which would encourage a general return of refugees to the state, but the rhetoric and tone of the missive betrays his underlying bitterness about the war and his hatred of those responsible for the prolonged conflict.

Trenton 22d April 1782

Dear Brother

I have just now received your Letter of the 12th instant, desiring my passport for Mr. Philip Sch[u]yler to come from New York to Second River,¹ and for the two Miss Schuylers to go thither and fetch him. I am persuaded that I need use no arguments to convince either you, or sister Livingston,² of the particular pleasure it would give me to oblige her in any request that was consistent with my duty to this State to grant. But the present is not in that Predicament. I have never given any permission for a person to return into this State, who had voluntarily left our lines to go into those of the enemy, as I am informed this Gentleman has done. Such people have had an opportunity to make their election. They have made it. They must abide the event of their choice; and we do not want them back again. Nor have I ever granted a