

VIII THE LOYALIST OPPOSITION

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

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permission for their relations living amongst us, to visit them in the enemys lines. This rule of conduct I have prescribed to my self, to avoid the pernicious consequences that would naturally result from its opposite. And this rule I have inviolably adhered to, in opposition to the warmest solicitations of my nearest connections, having in similar cases refused the applications of Lady Stirling,³ Sister Hoffman,⁴ & the Children of Mrs. Van Horne.⁵ I am sensible that in particular instances the Rule might be counter acted without public detriment, and probably in the case in question, the readmission of Mr. Schuyler would not prove injurious to the State. But the Precedent would be pernicious, and once established no one in like circumstances could be refused without the imputation of partiality: And the fatal consequences that would attend an universal indulgence are too obvious to require an illustration. My Relations, I am Sure, would not wish me to adopt a measure that would either be prejudicial to the Country on the one hand, or expose my administration on the other to be branded with the reproach of partiality to Individuals.

I hope, however, that this will not prevent Sister from prosecuting her purpose of coming into New-Jersey to see her Friends & Relations, who, I dare say, will be glad to see her; and I believe none more so, than my family at Elizabeth Town. If she inquires about the proper rout as she comes on, I believe she will be in no danger from the enemy. . . .

I doubt whether we shall have a Peace this summer, as the ultra-atlantic blockheads⁶ will probably try another campaign, which will only redound to our advantage by bringing them so much the lower, & the winter I suppose will be consumed in negotiation.⁷ But next Spring, I believe we must have it, as the people of England, among many other reasons that inspire that hope, are turning Liberty boys in shoals, and are determined, whether the royal Fool⁸ will hear or not, to beseige his throne with petitions and remonstrances against the farther prosecution of the war. Scotland itself, even the Land of rebellion and loyalty, is running into associations & committees, and drawing the most spirited remonstrances for putting an immediate period to the american war, in order to prevent the utter ruin of Great Britain. What think you of Congress now!⁹ Rivington¹⁰ owes me [one] of his ears; & I suppose Governor Clinton¹¹ claims the other; and as [the] fellow [has] but two, the public make [may]¹² take his head. I am

your affectionate Brother & humble Servant
WIL. LIVINGSTON

1. The Passaic River. The New Jersey branch of the Schuyler family, most of whom remained loyal to the crown, owned iron mines and real estate near present-day Belleville in Essex County.

2. Probably Catherine Livingston Lawrence, wife of Loyalist exile John Lawrence.

3. Sarah Livingston Alexander, wife of William Alexander (Lord Stirling), major general in the Continental army.

4. Alida Livingston Hoffman.

5. Probably the offspring of Philip Van Horne, former militia colonel and a prosperous merchant from New York City who retired to a large estate near

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Bound Brook, Somerset County, at the onset of the war. Although personal friends of Governor William Livingston and his family, the Van Hornes openly and regularly entertained British officers and noted Loyalists in their home.

6. The British ministers and military officers.

7. In April 1782 peace talks began in Paris with Benjamin Franklin representing America and Richard Oswald for Great Britain; negotiations continued throughout the year (see Sec. IX, Doc. 12, headnote).

8. King George III.

9. A reference to Thomas Bradbury Chandler's pamphlet *What Think ye of Congress Now?* (New York, 1775) which ridiculed the leaders of the popular movement as well as the Continental Congress.

10. New York City royalist publisher James Rivington.

11. George Clinton, governor of New York from 1777 to 1795 and from 1801 to 1804.

12. The word is "make" in the manuscript; Livingston apparently made a slip of the pen, intending to write "may."

14 John Rutherford to A Member of the Legislature

[*PNJHS*, 2d ser. (1867), 1:179-82.]

Interest outweighed principles and passions in the minds of some Jersey-men when it came to shaping attitudes toward former Loyalists. To young John Rutherford (1760-1840), who had sat out the war as a neutral in Bergen County, the key to future economic prosperity in New Jersey was the development of extensive commerce with other states and nations. But, as was the case in other states, most of New Jersey's principal merchants had been Loyalists and were now in exile. Together with his father, Walter Rutherford, and James Parker, two wealthy merchant-landowners who had retired to rural estates in Hunterdon County during the war and thus were suspected of being covert Loyalists, John Rutherford proposed the creation of free ports coupled with a plan of general amnesty as the best means of inducing royalist refugees and merchants from other states to establish business enterprises in New Jersey. The letter to an unidentified member of the New Jersey legislature which follows outlines Rutherford's thinking on the matter. The idea received a warm reception in the Jersey business community; in 1784 the legislature designated Burlington and Perth Amboy free ports and granted citizenship in those cities to anyone (except those who had engaged in wanton plunder or murder) who swore allegiance to the state and engaged in mercantile activities there for at least one month. The free port concept collapsed for both economic and political reasons: relatively few Loyalist merchants took up residence in the state, and the federal