

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

independent companies were sufficient for the continent. And why cannot we do without so many regiments when every enemy is removed at least a thousand miles from our borders?

But independence is suggested and made the pretence, more than a fear of Indian inroads. Those who make these suggestions are enemies to their country, and are most likely to put the thought into the heads of the colonists by the very means they take to *prevent* dependence. Separate governments and an encouragement to agriculture and settlement, will effectually fix it. Taxes and a restraint on the West India trade are most likely to force the colonists into manufactures and put independence into their heads. *They are in the high road to it now, and though 'tis true that they have not strength to effect it, but must submit, yet 'tis laying the foundation for great trouble and expense to Britain, in keeping that by force which she might easily do without, and alienating a people which she might make her greatest prop and security.*⁷

1. The printed date in Whitehead, 1755, is a typographical error.
2. It should be noted that the Stamp Act would not have been a drain on American specie; all revenue raised by the act was to be spent in the colonies.
3. Whitehead's deletion.
4. The Rockingham ministry, established in July 1765.
5. Whitehead's deletion.
6. In point of fact, the English settlers had been at war with the western Indians (save for the Iroquois confederacy of the Six Nations, which sided with the British) for most of the past three-quarters of a century as allies of the French: King William's War (1689-1697), Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), King George's War (1740-1748), the French and Indian War (1754-1763), and Pontiac's Rebellion (1763-1764).
7. Whitehead's transcription ends here; these may be his italics.

8 The Essex County Stamp Act Resolves

[*Supplement to the New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy,*
October 31, 1765.]

The mass meetings held to protest the Stamp Act were vitally important for both the procedural and ideological development of the subsequent independence movement. These local, grass-roots gatherings were to provide the foundation of the extralegal political organization that first paralleled and then replaced the duly constituted royal government of New Jersey; because they were open to all, they increased the opportunity to participate in political

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activities, advanced the concept of popular sovereignty, and increased the political consciousness of the people. In a word, such gatherings promoted the democratic revolution. Moreover, as the Essex resolves reveal, Jersey men preferred peaceful community pressure to violence as a means of registering opposition to the Stamp Act.

October 25, 1765

At a general Meeting of the Freemen, Inhabitants of the County of Essex, in New-Jersey, at the free Borough of Elizabeth, on the 25th Day of October, in the Year of our Lord 1765, being the Anniversary of the happy Accession of his present Majesty King George the Third, to the Crown of Great-Britain, &c. upon which Occasion the said Freemen unanimously, and with one Voice declared.

First. That they have at all Times heretofore, and ever would bear true Allegiance to his Majesty King George the Third, and his royal Predecessors, and wished to be governed agreeable to the Laws of the Land and the British Constitution, to which they ever had, and forever most cheerfully would submit.

Secondly. That the Stamp Act, prepared for the British Colonies in America, in their Opinion, is unconstitutional; and should the same take Place, agreeable to the Tenor of it, would be a manifest Destruction and Overthrow of their long-enjoyed, boasted and invaluable Liberties and Privileges.

Thirdly. That they will, by all lawful Ways and Means, endeavour to preserve and transmit to Posterity, their Liberty and Property, in as full and ample Manner as they received the same from their Ancestors.

Fourthly. That they will discountenance and discourage by all lawful Measures, the Execution and Effect of the Stamp-Act.

Fifthly. That they will detest, abhor, and hold in the utmost Contempt, all and every Person or Persons, who shall meanly accept of any Employment or Office, relating to the Stamp Act, or shall take any Shelter or Advantage from the same; and all and every Stamp Pimp, Informer, Favourer, and Encourager of the Execution of the said Act: and that they will have no Communication with any such Person, nor speak to them on any Occasion, unless it be to inform them of their Vileness.

9 “The Effigy of a Wretch” Hanged in New Brunswick

[*New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, October 31, 1765.]

The identity of the individual represented by the effigy is uncertain. It may have been, as is commonly thought, William Coxe, who resigned his commission as stamp distributor on September 2. But the language of the account