

II TAXES AND TROOPS

8 The Address of the Magistrates, Freeholders, and Inhabitants of New Brunswick to Major Charles Preston

[*New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, May 28, 1770.]

During the nearly three years the Twenty-sixth Regiment was stationed in New Jersey, not a single altercation of any significance took place between soldiers and the civilian population. The excellent record was due in part to the pains taken by commanding officers to keep their men under tight discipline since civilian-military disturbances were a prime fear of the military establishment. Moreover, most Jerseymen, especially those in the barracks towns, desired peaceful relations with the military because they recognized the economic benefits the community derived from the garrisons. On May 14, 1770, just prior to the departure of the Twenty-sixth from the province, Major Charles Preston, commander of the detachment cantoned in New Brunswick, and the ranking members of the host community bade each other a public farewell. The nature of their remarks reveals the amicable relations that had subsisted between the troops and the townspeople—a relationship that was more typical than the outbreaks of violence (see Doc. 2).

New York, May 28 1770

We are informed from Brunswick, that a little before the Troops (now arrived here) left that Place, several Gentlemen waited on the Commanding Officer, and paid their Compliments to him in the following Address. . . .

[“]Sir

Prompted by a pleasing Reflection on the Tranquility we have enjoyed from the Harmony that has uniformly subsisted between the Inhabitants, and the Troops quartered in the Barracks here under your immediate Command, for now near three Years, we wait upon you in Order to express our unfeigned Satisfaction. We look upon it as our Duty, and we are confident we speak the Sentiments of the whole Inhabitants of this Place and Neighborhood, when we return you our most cordial thanks for the Humanity and Benevolence which have been manifest in every Part of your Conduct, as well as the laudable Disposition you have constantly shewn to encourage that Harmony which has been productive of the utmost Peace and good Order, without the least Infringement on our Rights and Privileges. Thus impressed, permit us, Sir, with our most sincere Wishes for your Honour and Happiness in future Life, to offer you this public Acknowledgment of our Regard and your Merit.[”]

To which the Major returned the following answer.

“Gentlemen,

I return you my most sincere Thanks for the Honour you have done me, by your kind and obliging Address and receive with the greatest Pleasure this public Testimony of your Approbation of my Conduct, and of the Behaviour of the Troops under my Command. Permit me to assure you, that the general good Disposition of

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the Inhabitants of this Place, has rendered any Efforts of my Part, to preserve a Friendship and Harmony between them and the Troops, entirely unnecessary, and will always claim my Gratitude and best Wishes for their Prosperity.”

Afterwards the Major, together with other Officers quartered in this Place, at the Request of the Gentlemen who presented the Address, dined with them at the White-hall Tavern, where a genteel Entertainment was provided.

It is very remarkable (says our Correspondent) that since the Arrival of the Troops in this Place, now within two Months of three Years, only two Men out of one Hundred and Sixty of which they consisted have died, one a natural Death, and another by Accident; and that during that Time upwards of fifty Children have been born in the Barracks.

9 The Essex County Nonimportation Resolves

[*New-York Journal; or, the General Advertiser, June 7, 1770.*]

Ironically, widespread protest against the Townshend duties and zeal for the boycott of British goods occurred in New Jersey only after the repeal in March 1770 of all the import duties except the tax on tea. With the near total revocation of the exactions, merchants in the leading commercial communities in the colonies rapidly abandoned the nonimportation agreements. But not Jerseymen. Agrarian Jersey was not so adversely affected by the suspension of mercantile activities as were other colonies, and thus the province could better afford to adhere to the boycott and insist upon complete revocation of the duties. As the resolutions adopted by the mass meeting held in Elizabethtown indicate, the residents of New Jersey preferred to hew a hard line and thus joined in the denunciation of Rhode Islanders who had resumed business as usual in May.

At a Meeting of the Freeholders, Merchants, and Traders of the County of Essex, at Elizabeth-Town, on Tuesday the 5th of June, 1770.

Whereas the present critical State of public Affairs, loudly calls on every Member of the Community, to use his utmost Influence in order to support the invaluable Liberties, handed down to him by his Ancestors: The Merchants, Traders and Freeholders, of the County of Essex, having seriously considered the disinterested Efforts of the Merchants and Traders of the neighbouring Colonies, to save their sinking Country, by entering into an Agreement, not to import Goods from Great Britain, until the Acts of Parliament, passed for the express Purpose of raising a Revenue in the Colonies, should be totally repealed, which if continued, appears the most probable Means of accomplishing the valuable End so nobly designed. And it