

NEW JERSEY IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

1. Stamps and stamped paper for New Jersey arrived on October 5 and were stored aboard a British warship in Delaware Bay. Subsequent shipments were also placed aboard naval vessels; no stamps ever reached the colony.
2. This word appears "resent" in the manuscript; it seems likely that the copyist made an error in transcription.
3. That is, "met"; probably a transcription error.
4. The transcriber copied only the portion of the letter printed here.

11 The Stamp Act Resolves of the New Jersey Assembly

[*Votes and Proceedings, November 26-30, 1765* (Woodbridge, 1765), pp. 7-8.]

Prior to the Stamp Act Congress, the legislatures of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Rhode Island adopted resolutions protesting the exaction. Upon conclusion of the intercolonial conclave, most of the other assemblies immediately did likewise; only Georgia, New Hampshire, and North Carolina failed to issue a declaration of rights and grievances. Sections 2-6 of the Jersey resolves are identical with their numerical counterparts in the declarations of the Stamp Act Congress; section 7 of the former corresponds verbatim with section 10 of the latter remonstrance. It should be noted that the New Jersey resolutions, unlike those adopted elsewhere, were exclusively constitutional in nature. That no economic arguments were advanced in opposition to the Stamp Act by the assembly reflects the agrarian complexion of the provincial economy.

November 30, 1765

Whereas the late Act of Parliament, called the Stamp-Act, is found to be utterly subversive of Privileges inherent in, and originally secured by Grants and Confirmations from the Crown of Great-Britain to the Settlers of this Colony:¹ In Duty therefore to ourselves, our Constituents and Posterity, this House thinks it absolutely necessary to leave the following Resolves on our Minutes.

1. *Resolved, Nemine Contradicente,*²

That his Majesty's Subjects inhabiting this Province, are, from the strongest Motives of Duty, Fidelity, and Gratitude, inviolably attached to his Royal Person and Government; and have ever shewn, and we doubt not ever will, their utmost Readiness and Alacrity for acceding to the constitutional Requisitions of the Crown, as they have been from Time to Time made to this Colony.

I REFORM AND RESISTANCE

2. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That his Majesty's liege Subjects in this Colony, are entitled to all the inherent Rights and Liberties of his natural born Subjects, within the Kingdom of Great-Britain.

3. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That it is inseparably essential to the Freedom of a People, and the undoubted Right of Englishmen, that no Taxes be imposed on them, but with their own Consent, given personally or by their Representatives.

4. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That the People of this Colony are not, and from their remote Situation cannot be represented in the Parliament of Great-Britain; and if the Principle of taxing the Colonies without their Consent, should be adopted, the People here would be subjected to the Taxation of two Legislatures; a Grievance unprecedented, and not to be thought of without the greatest Anxiety.

5. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That the only Representatives of the People of this Colony, are Persons chosen by themselves; and that no Taxes ever have been, or can be imposed on them, agreeable to the Constitution of this Province, granted and confirmed by his Majesty's most gracious Predecessors, but by their own Legislature.

6. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That all Supplies being free Gifts;³ for the People of Great-Britain to grant to his Majesty the Property of the People of this Colony, without their Consent, and being represented; would be unreasonable, and render useless Legislation in this Colony in the most essential Point.

7. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That the Profits of Trade arising from this Colony, centering in Great-Britain, eventually contributes to the Supplies granted there to the Crown.

8. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That the giving unlimited Power to any Subject or Subjects, to impose what Taxes they please in the Colonies, under the Mode of Regulating the Prices of Stamp Vellum, Parchment and Paper, appears to us unconstitutional, contrary to the Rights of the Subject, and apparently dangerous in its Consequences.

9. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That any Incumbrance, which in Effect restrains the Liberty of the Press in America, is an Infringement upon the Subjects Liberty.⁴

10. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That the Extention of the Powers of the Court of Admiralty within this Province, beyond its antient Limits, is a violent Innovation of the Right of Trials by Jury,---a Right which this House, upon the Principles of their British Ancestors, hold most dear and invaluable.

11. *Resolved, Nem. Con.*

That as the Tranquility of this Colony hath been interrupted through Fear of the dreadful Consequences of the Stamp-Act, that therefore the Officers of the Government, who go on in their Offices for the Good and Peace of the Province in the accustomed Manner, while Things are in their present unsettled Situation, will, in the Opinion of this House, be entituled to the Countenance of the Legislature; and it is recommended to our Constituents, to use what Endeavours lie in their Power, to preserve the Peace, Quiet, Harmony, and Good-Order of the Government,

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that no Heats, Disorders or Animosities, may in the least obstruct the united Endeavours that are now strongly engaged for the Repealing the Act above-mentioned, and other Acts affecting the Trade of the Colonies.

1. The "Concessions and Agreements" of 1665. See Doc. 2, note 2.
2. Without opposition, unanimously.
3. Supplies are taxes; the concept here is that the people, through their elected representatives, can only give money (revenue) to the crown—it cannot be extracted or forced from them.
4. Strange as it may seem for a colony without a newspaper or flourishing printing profession, New Jersey was the only province to register official opposition to the Stamp Act as an infringement upon the freedom of the press.

12 "A Lover of Liberty" to the Woodbridge Sons of Liberty

[New Jersey Manuscripts, 151, New Jersey Historical Society.]

While nearly all Jerseymen opposed the Stamp Act, there were many who feared that the excesses of the protest activities would hinder rather than help secure a redress of grievances. To such people, law and order took precedence over the specific points of contention. The document that follows is a rough draft of one of "Two papers sent to the sons of Liberty at Woodbridge Feby. 1766." I have incorporated interlinear revisions and corrections into the present text. The identity of the writer is unknown. However, his sentiments are most consonant with the law-and-order, nonviolent attitude current among the Quakers of Woodbridge, a conspicuous minority in a zealous Whig community.

[February 1766]

When the people Enter into Associations & Unite in Opposition to any Particular Measure of Government, It must be presumed that they are justly Alarmed, that something is Attempted Ag[ains]t their Liberty or property, not Warranted by the Constitution Under Which they Live. I will not Argue w[h]ether This is the Case or no at this time. I will rather suppose that the Late Laws especially that Called the Stamp Act, are destructive of Commerce in gen[era]l & American Liberty in particular. But altho I suppose this, and am satisfied of the truth of it, I am to