New Jersey in the

American Revolution, 1763-1783

A Documentary History
Constitution of New Jersey.

...
New Jersey in the American Revolution 1763-1783
A Documentary History

EDITED BY
LARRY R. GERLACH

New Jersey Historical Commission
TRENTON
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Preface

During the nearly two hundred years that have passed since the formal declaration of independence in July 1776, historians have written countless books and articles concerning the creation of the American republic. As a result, we surely know more about the American Revolution than any other national rebellion in history. And yet, ironically, as our comprehension of the Revolution increases, our appreciation of what that momentous event meant to individual members of the revolutionary generation wanes. Thus on the eve of the Bicentennial of American independence, the general public knows a great deal about the causes, course, and consequences of the Revolution but relatively little about the hopes and fears, triumphs and tribulations of a people who lived through nearly three decades of rebellion, warfare, and nation-building. The available literature offers detailed and sophisticated analyses of virtually every aspect of the Revolution, but only infrequently allows modern readers to experience vicariously the temper of the times or to develop a sense of intimacy with and empathy for the men and women of the Revolution. The problem is twofold. Biographies, attempts to personalize the revolutionary experience, are limited by resources to a small leadership elite—the Jeffersons, Franklins, Washingtons—to the exclusion of the average citizen upon whom the ultimate success of the Revolution depended. More important, we have come to rely upon what historians tell us happened rather than reading the historical record for ourselves.

As the historian knows, it is only through an examination of the records of the past—the writings of those who lived during the latter third of the eighteenth century—that one can begin to understand the nature and meaning of the American Revolution. Although historical studies enhance our knowledge of the Revolution by systematically ordering, analyzing, and interpreting vast quantities of material, there is no substitute for reading what contemporaries
themselves had to say about the world in which they lived. Histories are not history: we can never recover the sights and sounds of the past. But we can recapture the views of a surprisingly large segment of the revolutionary generation. Knowing or not, in their personal writings they spoke to posterity. Neither professional journalists reporting for the record nor historians interpreting events for the edification of future generations, they were just ordinary people who, for whatever reasons, penned accounts of their participation in and reaction to the events of their day. Like people at any time and any place, they were both impartial and prejudiced, knowledgeable and uninformed, candid and dishonest. However imperfect, such documentary evidence is the stuff from which histories are made and the key to a proper understanding of the Spirit of '76.

This volume provides a convenient compilation of documents basic to an understanding of the American Revolution in New Jersey. Materials have been selected from the widest possible range of sources—correspondence, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, broadsides, town records, committee minutes, legislative journals. (Pamphlet literature has been excluded because of limitations of space.) The documents are divided into two general portions: the coming of the Revolution and the War for Independence. The first seven sections, chronologically unfolding the origins and course of the rebellion, constitute a documentary history; the last six consist of a collection of documents illustrative of the development of selected topics. More specifically, the volume focuses upon the evolution of the protest-independence movement, the transition from royal to republican government, the maintenance of civil authority during time of war, the division between rebel and royalist, the travails of warfare, and the experiment in self-government at the state and national levels under the Articles of Confederation. The emphasis throughout is less upon public events (e.g., battles) and policies (e.g., laws) than upon the personal reactions of individuals and communities to the revolutionary experience.

This compendium is designed to meet the needs of both research scholars and general readers. For the historian, the volume makes readily available materials previously printed in a variety of publications as well as records from diverse archives that either have never been published or have not been reprinted since original publication in newspapers or contemporary tracts. For the layman, the documents will hopefully provide greater appreciation of our revolutionary heritage by making available the important records of the day, by viewing the Revolution from the perspective of participants rather than modern historians, and by enabling each reader to evaluate the documents and thus become his own historian.

The editor of historical documents faces an initial crucial decision: whether to render a faithful transcription of the original document or to make textual alterations in accordance with modern language standards. The rationale for the former procedure is threefold: the historian has an obligation to present the records of the past as they were written instead of as he would have them written; the archaic and variant spellings along with vagaries of syntax meaningfully impart the flavor and style of a bygone era; any modification of a document leads logically to a complete modernization of the text. On the other hand, advocates of the latter method contend that authenticity is not
synonymous with antiquarianism (does use of the ampersand instead of the word *and* matter?); that documents are printed for the use of contemporaries and ought therefore to be readily intelligible to modern readers (who would or could read Shakespeare in the original?); and that, after all, the substance of a document is more important than its structure. Ultimately, editorial policy must be determined by the primary purpose of a documentary project.

Because this collection is intended for the use of general readers as well as scholarly investigators, I have endeavored to provide reproductions of documents that are both readable and reliable. No attempt has been made to impose artificial consistency upon the selections. Save for minor editorial revisions, previously published documents appear here as first printed; manuscripts conform to the originals. Most texts are presented in full; deletions are indicated by either an ellipsis (...) or an explanatory note enclosed in brackets. The terms “illegible” and “torn” enclosed in brackets indicate, respectively, undecipherable words and missing portions of a manuscript. Despite the temptation to “improve” upon another’s writing, I have “corrected” neither syntax nor spelling, even in the often irregular phonetic renditions of proper names. However, obvious typographical errors in printed materials have been silently corrected. Alterations in punctuation have been made only when deemed necessary to clarify especially convoluted prose. Confusing or unconventional abbreviations and contractions have been expanded. When necessary the first letters of sentences have been capitalized and terminal punctuation added; similarly, periods have been supplied for all abbreviations (Mr. for Mr). Superscript letters have been reduced to line, dashes used either for ornamentation or in lieu of periods have been removed, italics used for effect instead of emphasis have been deleted, and capitalized or italicized salutations in published documents have been reduced to lower case or set in roman type. The dateline, salutation, and complimentary close of correspondence remain in their original form; in all cases datelines appear at the heads of letters. Readers will no doubt find inconsistencies, perhaps even contradictions, in the editing of this volume. Notwithstanding general guidelines, I have opted for flexibility in editing each document according to its individual characteristics rather than imposing rigid, arbitrary standards upon the entire collection.

Because this volume is intended for use by persons who have little or no prior knowledge of revolutionary New Jersey, the editorial apparatus is rather elaborate. Headnotes provide context for individual documents, while footnotes explain textual material that might be unfamiliar to the general reader. The numerous cross-references facilitate placing the selections in the proper historical contexts; repetition of information in footnotes enables readers to comprehend each document independently. The brief introductions to each section are meant to serve only as guides to the documents and not as a concise history of New Jersey in the American Revolution.

Readers who wish to explore further the history of revolutionary New Jersey may draw upon a wealth of material. The following general studies are especially recommended: Richard P. McCormick, *New Jersey from Colony to State, 1609-1789* (Princeton, 1964) and John E. Pomfret, *Colonial New Jersey: A History* (New York, 1973), for the Revolution seen from the perspective of the

A project such as this is truly a collaborative effort. Publication of these documents would not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement of William C. Wright, associate director of the New Jersey Historical Commission. This is unquestionably a better book in every respect because of his perceptive comments and corrections. The editorial skills of Lee R. Parks, assistant editor of the New Jersey Historical Commission, grace the entire volume. At the beginning of the project Dean Richard P. McCormick of Rutgers University offered important advice concerning editorial policy. Mark E. Lender and Dennis P. Ryan read Sections IX-X and VIII respectively at an early stage and made valuable suggestions for improvement. While much of the merit of this work is attributable to others, I alone am responsible for any deficiencies that remain.

For facilitating research at their respective institutions, supplying photocopies of requested materials, and granting permission to publish the manuscripts that appear in this volume, I am grateful to Carolyn B. Milligan and Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., of the American Philosophical Society Library; Howard H. Peckham of the William L. Clements Library of the University of Michigan; Niels H. Sonne of the St. Mark's Library of the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church; Magdalene Houlooyd, formerly of the Glassboro State College Learning Resource Center; Edwin B. Bronner of the Haverford College Library; Robert Van Benthuysen, formerly librarian of the Monmouth County Historical Association; Bruce W. Stewart and Thomas O. C. Smith of the Morristown National Historical Park; William T. Kerr, formerly of the New Jersey Historical Society; Robert C. Morris of the New Jersey Historical Society; Bernard Bush of the New Jersey Historical Commission; Kenneth W. Richards
PREFACE

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A generous grant-in-aid from the New Jersey Historical Commission underwrote a considerable portion of the expense involved in the preparation of this volume. Pamela Jones transcribed numerous documents and typed the various drafts of the manuscript with skill and forbearance. Elizabeth Rhodes Dalgliesh prepared the index with her customary precision.

Larry R. Gerlach
University of Utah
October 1974
## Abbreviations

List of Abbreviations and Shortened References to Published Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Correspondence</td>
<td><em>Selections from the Correspondence of the Executive of New Jersey, from 1776 to 1786</em> (Newark, 1848).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCCS Minutes</td>
<td><em>Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey</em> (Trenton, 1879).</td>
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Votes and Proceedings

Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Province [State] of New Jersey. The minutes of the lower house of the legislature published under various titles and in various places after the conclusion of the legislative sessions. Herein the title will be given uniformly as Votes and Proceedings followed by the dates of the session and the place of publication.

Works of John Witherspoon


Writings of George Washington