

Annotation

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Then Honored, Now Largely Forgotten HENRY LAURENS AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY WAR

BY C. JAMES TAYLOR

The Henry Laurens Papers project, which is entering its final stages, has long been a presence in the University of South Carolina's history department. Funded in part by the NHPRC since 1965, it produced its first volume in 1968. For many years, the project's office doors have borne the simple and accurate wording "Laurens Papers." The unfamiliarity of the public (here, university students) with Henry Laurens has been brought home to the editors by the inquiries of passersby. Not the least of which was one student's comment to the effect that "Lauren Papers must be important, because she has three offices!"

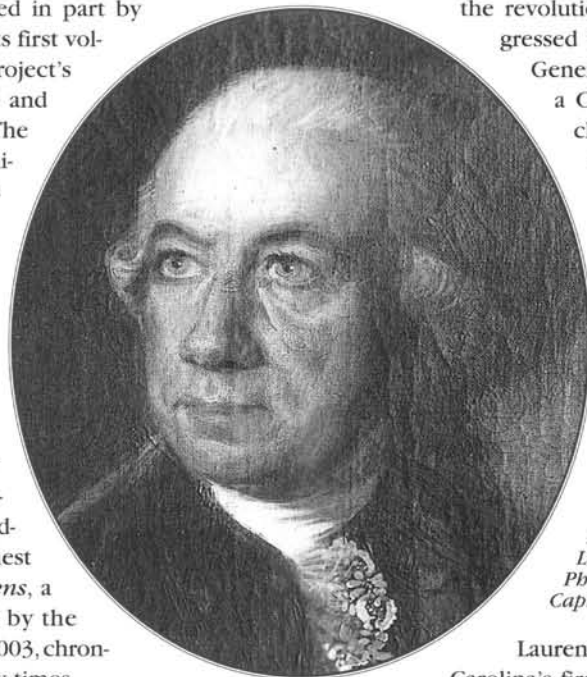
Even though modern American students and the public at large do not readily recognize the name of Henry Laurens, it is clear that the founding generation held him, and other leaders now largely forgotten, in the highest esteem. *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, a 15-volume edition to be completed by the University of South Carolina Press in 2003, chronicles a fascinating life in extraordinary times.

Henry Laurens (1724-1792) was a merchant, planter, and political leader in late colonial South Carolina. His position in the early conflict between England and her colonies moved from that of conservative Anglo-American merchant to that of concerned American republican when he became involved in a dispute with the royal customs officials at Charleston after they seized two of his vessels in 1767.

By the early 1770s, Laurens had retired, or at least taken a sabbatical, from active public life to educate his three sons in England and Europe. He sailed from America in September 1771 and did not return until December 1774. While in England, he helped to organize opposition to the so-called Coercive Acts, the British Government's response to the Boston Tea Party. His influence among South Carolinians there made them most numerous among the Americans who petitioned the Commons, the Lords, and the King in March 1774. Laurens' stay in England, during which he witnessed the administration's lack of response to American

grievances, helped to form his position on the eve of the conflict.

Within a matter of weeks after his return to Charleston, the revolutionary movement in South Carolina progressed to the point of electing successively a General Committee, a Provincial Congress, and a Council of Safety. Laurens rose to be the chairman or president of each of these bodies. His position as a respected moderate early in the transition from provincial to state government made him an acceptable executive to the extreme factions within South Carolina. He prided himself on his long work hours and the positions he took to hold the South Carolina factions together. As a consequence, he became more necessary than popular during the early stages of the Revolution in South Carolina.



Portrait of Henry Laurens, attributed to Lemuel Francis Abbott. U.S. Senate Collection. Photograph courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol.

Laurens served as vice president under South Carolina's first constitution in 1776. During that summer, the British attempted to invade the state, but were repulsed when their naval attack on Charleston failed. Laurens reviewed the events of the thwarted British attack on Charleston in an August 14, 1776, letter to his son John, then a student in London. This is the most frequently cited Laurens document, because it included bold comments on the institution of slavery in America. Most notable was his comment, "I abhor slavery." During the great struggle over the institution of slavery during the 19th century, Laurens would be cited by abolitionists as a South Carolina plantation owner who opposed slavery. Modern critics point out, however, that despite this and many other statements he made against slavery, Laurens continued to hold hundreds of souls in bondage.

Laurens's contribution to the national revolutionary movement began in 1777 when he was elected to the Continental Congress. He arrived in Philadelphia on July 22, 1777, and continued in the service of the nation until 1784. John Adams, who much later would fall out with Laurens, sang his praises in a *(continued on page 10)*

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FROM THE EDITOR

The September 2001 issue of *Annotation* focuses on historical documentary editing projects relating to the American Revolution. NHPRC has provided support, in the form of financial support or endorsement, for each of the nine projects represented in this issue. A listing of NHPRC-supported projects relating to the American Revolution appears at the end of this column.

Our feature articles are:

"Then Honored, Now Largely Forgotten: Henry Laurens and the American Revolutionary War," by C. James Taylor, editor of *The Papers of Henry Laurens*.

"Naval Documents of the American Revolution," by Michael J. Crawford, editor of *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*.

"Ethan Allen and His Kin," by John J. Duffy, editor, with Ralph H. Orth, J. Kevin Graffagnino, and Michael A. Bellesiles, of *Ethan Allen and His Kin: The Correspondence, 1772-1816* (University Press of New England: Hanover, NH, 1998).

"Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789," by Ronald M. Gephart, who served as assistant and associate editor of the *Letters of Delegates* series.

"Benjamin Franklin, Zealous Partisan," by Jonathan R. Dull, senior associate editor of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*.

"The Carroll Family of Maryland and the Revolution," by Ron Hoffman, editor of *The Papers of Charles Carroll of Carrollton*, and director of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture.

"Colonel James Monroe and the American Revolution: War, Ambition, Patriotism, and Symbolism," by Daniel Preston, editor of the Papers of James Monroe.

"The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784," by Elizabeth M. Nuxoll, co-editor with Mary A. Gallagher of Volumes 8 and 9 of *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784*, and now associate editor of the Papers of Clarence Mitchell, Jr.

"Surviving Fire, Storm, and the Garbage Collector: The Papers of General Nathanael Greene," by Dennis Conrad, general editor of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*.

NHPRC-SUPPORTED PROJECTS RELATING TO THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

The Adams Papers

Ethan Allen and His Kin: Correspondence, 1772-1819

The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury

The Papers of David Avery, 1746-1818 (microfilm edition)

The Diary of Isaac Backus

The Papers of Josiah Bartlett

Papers of Josiah Bartlett (microfilm edition)

Baynton, Wharton, and Borgan Papers in the Pennsylvania State Archives (microfilm edition)

John Macpherson Berrien Papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina Library (microfilm edition)

Thomas Burke Papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina Library (microfilm edition)

Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr

Papers of Aaron Burr, 1756-1836 (microfilm edition)

Charles Carroll Papers (microfilm edition)

The John Carroll Papers

Carter Family Papers, 1659-1797, in the Sabine Hall Collection (microfilm edition)

Papers of Tench Coxe (microfilm edition)

Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789

Draper Manuscripts (microfilm edition)

The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker (continued on page 4)

How Documentary Editing Can Improve "Our Lives, Our Fortunes, and Our Sacred Honor"



Around July 4 each year, magazines and newspapers often carry versions of a stirring article usually entitled "Our Lives, Our Fortunes, and Our Sacred Honor." The article details the lives and fates of the 56 signers of the Declaration of Independence, the men who, by their signing, committed an act of treason against the British Crown, and what happened to them after they committed themselves to the cause of the Revolution.

The various versions of the article recount the efforts of the British to capture and punish the signers and the extraordinary ordeals many faced during the war. The article mentions that when Charles Carroll, a delegate from Maryland and one of the wealthiest men in America, was asked by John Hancock if he would sign, Carroll replied, "Most willingly." When he backed away from the table, one delegate whispered, "There go a few millions!" Another signer, Robert Morris, the merchant prince of Philadelphia, lost his own fortune during the war. Others lost more than fortune; several lost their lives and others lost members of their families. If sacrifice is the measure of true patriotism, the article demonstrates, the signers of the Declaration were true patriots.

Last year, a newspaper columnist was the latest author to publish a version of this article. In the days following its publication, he received numerous complimentary messages about the piece; but he also received a few communications questioning some of the factual statements in the article and inquiring into his research methodology.

After doing some subsequent research, the author acknowledged that he had unintentionally perpetuated several myths in his version of the article. For example, Thomas Nelson, Jr., a wealthy merchant-planter from Virginia, did not, as the various versions of the article have suggested over the years, die a pauper, nor was his home occupied by the British during the Battle of Yorktown. The home was that of his uncle.

The author regretted the errors, he said. As a journalist, he cared deeply about accuracy. He had checked biographical information, historical accounts, and other sources before writing the piece. He had trusted these materials, and had not caught some of the myths. In fact, most of the materials he had consulted had been secondary sources, history filtered through the perceptions of others—sometimes many others—and often based upon accounts and assumptions not bolstered by primary documentary materials.

Before the advent of modern historical editing and the work of the projects supported by the NHPRC, many of the stories of indi-

viduals such as Robert Morris, Charles Carroll, James Monroe, and others were understandably wrapped in myth and legend. However much one might have wanted to tell "what really happened," accounts can be distorted by time, distance, failing memory, and multiple points of view. Anyone who has ever played the game of "Telephone," whereby one person whispers a fact to the person next to him, and so on around the circle until the message comes back to the originator—usually mangled beyond recognition—has experienced this phenomenon. Ironically, the extraordinary growth of the Internet has in some ways cast the legends in even stronger steel, repeating misinformation and misguided assumptions to a larger and larger audience, and even creating new misconceptions as well-meaning students and history buffs post "quotations" that contain inadvertent errors that can actually misrepresent the point the speaker had intended.

Those who study and revere our history needn't rely any longer upon tall tales and secondhand storytelling. This issue of *Annotation* presents essays by documentary editors of the papers of Benjamin Franklin, Henry Laurens, Robert Morris, Charles Carroll, James Monroe, Ethan Allen, and Nathanael Greene, as well as two other projects, *Letters to Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789*, and *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*. The NHPRC encourages and supports their work in preparing these editions: gathering original sources from around the world, producing reliable texts, and documenting the materials with concise contextual references. What, exactly, does that mean?

It means that these NHPRC-funded documentary editing projects make available the *primary* sources, the words actually written at the time. The projects work under rigorous editorial standards, and expend considerable effort to verify that the transcriptions of these words are authentic and error-free. And, in as few words as possible, but enough to be cogent, they describe the context in which the documents were prepared, explain unclear references and obsolete expressions, and identify important but unfamiliar historical figures.

These projects are making available the basic materials from which we can better understand the history and culture of our nation's early years. They are unearthing lost documents and new information. They are, above all, building on the solid foundation of authenticity and context, two factors that become more valuable with every passing day. Through these projects, the actual words and ideas of men who changed the world are changing the way we look at our history and how we define ourselves.

How wonderfully revolutionary!

NHPRC Application Deadlines

THE COMMISSION'S MEETINGS FOLLOW THE FISCAL YEAR OF OCTOBER 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30. CONSEQUENTLY, THE FIRST MEETING OF THE FISCAL YEAR IS IN NOVEMBER AND THE SECOND IS IN MAY.

June 1 (for the November meeting)

Proposals addressing the following top priorities:

- The NHPRC will provide the American public with widespread access to the papers of the founders of our democratic republic and its institutions by ensuring the timely completion of eight projects now in progress to publish the papers of George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and papers that document the Ratification of the Constitution, the First Federal Congress, and the early Supreme Court
- The NHPRC will promote broad public participation in historical documentation by collaborating with State Historical Records Advisory Boards to plan and carry out jointly funded programs to strengthen the nation's archival infrastructure and expand the range of records that are protected and accessible
- The NHPRC will enable the nation's archivists, records managers, and documentary editors to overcome the obstacles and take advantage of the opportunities posed by electronic technologies by continuing to provide leadership in funding research and development on appraising, preserving, disseminating, and providing access to important documentary sources in electronic form

OCTOBER 1 (for the May meeting)

Proposals not addressing the above priorities, but focusing on an activity authorized in the NHPRC statute as follows:

- collecting, describing, preserving, compiling, and publishing (including microfilming and other forms of reproduction) of documentary sources significant to the history of the United States
- conducting institutes, training and educational courses, and fellowships related to the activities of the Commission
- disseminating information about documentary sources through guides, directories, and other technical publications
- or, more specifically, documentary editing and publishing; archival preservation and processing of records for access; developing or updating descriptive systems; creation and development of archival and records management programs; development of standards, tools, and techniques to advance the work of archivists, records managers, and documentary editors; and promotion of the use of records by teachers, students, and the public

APPLICATION GUIDELINES AND FORMS MAY BE REQUESTED FROM NHPRC, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, 700 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NW, ROOM 111, WASHINGTON, DC 20408-0001, 202-501-5610 (VOICE), 202-501-5601 (FAX), nbprc@nara.gov (E-MAIL), OR BY ACCESSING OUR WEB SITE AT www.nara.gov/nara/nbprc/

FROM THE EDITOR (Continued from page 2)

The Emerging Nation: A Documentary History of the Foreign Relations of the United States Under the Articles of Confederation, 1780-1789

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin
Horatio Gates Papers, 1726-1828 (microfilm edition)

The Papers of General Nathanael Greene

The Papers of Alexander Hamilton

Naval Papers of Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, bart., 1766-1783,
and Sir Graham Eden Hamond, bart., 1799-1825 (microfilm edition)

The Papers of James Iredell

The Papers of John Jay

The Papers of Thomas Jefferson

Jefferson Papers of the University of Virginia, 1732-1828
(microfilm edition)

The Papers of John Paul Jones (microfilm edition)

Lafayette: A Guide to the Letters, Documents, and Manuscripts in the United States

Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776-1790

The Papers of Henry Laurens

Lee Family Papers, 1742-1795 (microfilm edition)

Benjamin Lincoln Papers (microfilm edition)

The Papers of William Livingston

The Papers of William Livingston (microfilm edition)

The Papers of James Madison

The Papers of George Mason, 1725-1792

Philip Mazzei: Selected Writings and Correspondence

Philip Mazzei: The Comprehensive Microfilm Edition of His Papers, 1730-1816

James Monroe Papers in Virginia Repositories (microfilm edition)

The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784

Manuscript Collection, Morristown National Historical Park
(microfilm edition)

Naval Documents of the American Revolution

The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family

Collected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family
(microfilm edition)

Timothy Pickering Papers (microfilm edition)

John Rutledge Papers in the Southern Historical Collection of the University of North Carolina Library (microfilm edition)

Papers of General Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, 1777-1794
(microfilm edition)

Ezra Stiles Papers at Yale University (microfilm edition)

Artemas Ward Papers (microfilm edition)

The Papers of George Washington



Naval Documents of the American Revolution

BY MICHAEL J. CRAWFORD

The United States Navy's *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* series is making possible the comprehensive study of the naval aspects of the American Revolution. To date, the Naval Historical Center has published ten volumes of this series, beginning with the first in 1964. In a total of 14,251 pages, the published volumes contain the texts of the contemporary records necessary for a comprehensive documentation of the war at sea—including bays, rivers, and lakes—during the period from December 1774 through December 1777. The project's files contain copies of hundreds of thousands of documents drawn from hundreds of repositories and collections throughout the United States and from abroad and constitute the most extensive collection of source materials on the naval war of the American Revolution in existence. The series has had four principal editors: William Bell Clark (died in 1968), William James Morgan (retired as Senior Historian Emeritus in 1982), William S. Dudley (promoted to Senior Historian, Naval Historical Center in 1990), and Michael J. Crawford.

Most historians who have written on naval aspects of the American Revolution since the beginning of the publication of the series have relied heavily on the published volumes. Some have exploited the project's document files for periods not yet covered by the published volumes. Several have sought and received the help of project staff in their researches.

Historians have made good use of the series but have hardly tapped its full

potential. In the main, historians have used the series to study naval operations, administration, and legislation, and to document details concerning particular actions, ships, and sailors. Other works, however, reveal two additional, but under-exploited, strengths of the series: documentation of the social and economic impact of the war at sea, and local history. Richard Buel, Jr., has plumbed the series in examining the impact of British naval supremacy on America's wartime economy. Several students of the war in the Chesapeake region have employed the series to write histories of local naval and amphibious operations and of state navies. Others have mined the series to help research economic and related aspects of local history, such as the impact of the war on shipbuilding, and on Maryland and Virginia ports. More studies like these for the whole Atlantic and Gulf coasts of North America are needed to enrich our understanding of the meaning of the Revolutionary struggle to individuals and localities.

The Naval Documents of the American Revolution series is replete with materials for the history of naval engagements, blockades, and prize-taking, as well as the strategy, logistics, policy, administration, and politics involved in the war at sea. The series also documents the American and British armies in joint operations with their respective navies, such as during the struggle

for control of the Delaware River after the British captured Philadelphia, and thrust up the Hudson in October 1777. But the strengths of the series do not stop with these themes of traditional military history. The series is a rich mine for subjects of use for a greater variety of history writing. While the series contains plenty on leading Revolutionary figures, well-known names like that of John Paul Jones, and enough on naval actions to lend the volumes a strong smell of gunpowder, it also contains much grist for the mills of social and economic historians. Documents written by naval officers, navy boards, naval agents, and politicians tell a great deal about the experiences of common seamen, blacks, and women, as they were shaped by the naval war. But what is more, common seamen, blacks, and women, themselves, speak in the documents printed in this series, revealing how what they thought and did influenced the course of the war.



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The subject of this series is not an individual, nor even an institution, but the war at sea. Hence, it contains records revealing the texture of the daily lives of ordinary people, such as the letters of semi-literate sea captains, round robins from illiterate sailors, records of desertions and courts-martial, prisoners' diaries, and accounts of the fitting out and supplying of ships and of families that nursed sick seamen.

What seamen ate, what they expected when they signed on to a ship of war, and how they asserted their rights are just a few of the more obvious historical problems that might be addressed through these records. Documents published in the tenth volume illuminate some of these potential subjects for study.

Historians have used advertisements for runaway slaves and indentured servants to learn about those two groups of Americans: how tall they stood, what they wore, what skills they practiced, their physical scars, what percentage of them stuttered, how good was their English. Similar studies of seamen in the Revolution could be made from advertisements for deserters.

The typical diet of a seaman at sea consisted of peas, wormy biscuits, moldy cheese, salt pork, and rum or whiskey. Yet, accounts for ships that were stationed in local waters, such as many of the state navy vessels, give a much different picture of what the seamen ate. The accounts of the Maryland Navy Ship *Defence* for October 1777, for instance, list cucumbers, onions, turnips, greens, oysters, goose, corn flour, and milk.



The *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* series helps document the place of blacks and slaves in the naval war. To capture a slaver was a way to sudden wealth for a privateer. Captures of this sort in the West Indies profited not only the privateers, but also local authorities, such as the French officials at Martinique who demanded a share of such captures in return for looking the other way when the human cargo was sold.

Black slaves appear prominently in the naval documents for the Chesapeake area. Advertisements for deserters indicate that slaves served on board the Virginia Navy galleys. Some slaves risked their lives to flee to British warships in the Chesapeake in hope of freedom, with varying degrees of success.

These records suggest a callous disregard of the humanity of the blacks on the part of many whites. One document bares one naval officer's particularly deep racism. A woman identified as "Cuba a Negro Woman of about Twenty five Years of Age" petitioned the Massachusetts State Council, stating that she had been taken in a British packet by the Connecticut Navy ship *Oliver Cromwell*. Then, contrary to Massachusetts state law, the ship's officers retained her as their property. "And the Lieut. (one Chapman) of the s^d Ship after abusing the Council and all Concerned for her in a most Scurrilous manner, Swore that he did not Believe God ever made a Negro and that in Spite of all Courts and Persons whatsoever, he would have her Sold as a Slave and Sent to the Jamaica."

Local historians will find much of value in this volume. What did it signify for a local economy to fit out a naval vessel? Consider what the fitting out of the Connecticut Navy ship *Oliver Cromwell* and brig *Defence* meant to the tradesmen and craftsmen of Boston listed in the navy agent's account: ship carpenter, mast maker, truckman, blacksmiths, block maker, cooper, joiners, butcher, glazier, oar maker, tanner, gunsmith, tin man, mathematical instrument maker, painters, wharfinger, sail maker, rope maker, ship chandler, tallow chandler, and bakers. Volume 10 contains a fair amount concerning conflict between Patriots and Loyalists in the Chesapeake, and elsewhere. The impact of the war on communities that

depended on the sea comes across in several pieces. A petition from the inhabitants of Norwalk to the Connecticut General Assembly for protection from British raiders illustrates the significance of the Connecticut State Navy to the coast dwellers.

Until the series has been completed, it will hardly be feasible for anyone to undertake to write a new, truly comprehensive history of the naval aspects of the American Revolution. The documentation is too scattered and the collections of source materials too extensive for any historian, however dedicated, to master. No new overall history of the American war at sea has taken the place of the standard works written nearly a century ago: Gardner W. Allen, *A Naval History of the American Revolution* (Boston and New York, 1913), and Charles Oscar Paullin, *The Navy of the American Revolution: Its Administration, its Policy and its Achievements*, (Cleveland, 1906).

In the meantime, with the *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* project approximately half completed, many historians of the American Revolution have been making good use of the series to write on operational, economic, and local aspects of the war at sea, including monographs on the Continental Navy; various state navies; privateering; particular campaigns; and officers' careers, individually and collectively.

The source materials published in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution* intimate that there is a great deal yet to be learned and written about the war at sea during the American Revolution. The series is a magnificent resource that makes those studies possible. ❖

MICHAEL J. CRAWFORD IS THE EDITOR OF THE *NAVAL DOCUMENTS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION* SERIES.

Continental Navy Sloop Providence, by William Nowland Van Powell, 1974. Oil on canvasboard. Naval Historical Center, Washington, DC.

The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781–1784

BY ELIZABETH M. NUXOLL

"The Derangement of our Money Affairs. The Enormity of our public Expenditures. The Confusion in all our Departments. The Languour of our general System. The complexity and consequent Inefficacy of our Operations. These are some, among the many, Reasons which have induced Congress to the Appointment of a Superintendant of Finance."

With these words, written on July 4, 1781, the fifth anniversary of American independence, Robert Morris (1734–1806) described the problems confronting him as head of the Department of Finance during the closing years of the American Revolution. When Morris took office under the Confederation Congress in the spring of 1781, the young American republic had been locked for 6 years in a devastating and costly international war with the greatest military power on the globe. The impotence of Congress, British military successes, and the general collapse of paper money had caused even staunch patriots to doubt the possibility of victory.

For the first time since independence, these developments combined to create a climate of opinion favorable to increasing the powers of Congress and its officers. Morris' appointment was a response to growing public reaction against the administrative waste and inefficiency that was sapping the war effort. His task was to improve Continental administration and restore public confidence in the financial integrity of the Government.

During the American Revolution, Morris' power and influence were probably greater than that of any other man except Washington. Yet today he is perhaps the least known of the great national leaders of the Revolutionary era. Most Americans, if they have heard of Morris at all, remember him as a signer of the Declaration of Independence who, popular tradition has it, financed the war against Britain from his personal fortune. Few, however, are aware that, as first executive head of the United States Treasury in a line of succession that continued with Alexander Hamilton and Albert Gallatin, he laid the economic and financial foundations of the American republic.

This lapse in our national memory can be attributed in large measure to the fact that his diary and many of his papers lay unpublished for nearly two centuries. *The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781–1784*, recently completed at Queens College of the City University of New York, is restoring Morris to his rightful place in our history by presenting the definitive edition of his diary, correspondence, and papers as Superintendent of Finance and Agent of Marine of the United States from 1781 to 1784.

Originating in 1968 with a grant from the New York City investment firm of Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette, and subsequently funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and numerous private sources, the edition was founded by Professor E. James Ferguson of Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, author of *The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776–1790*.

Morris' papers as Superintendent of Finance are unusually full. His diary, an official record of his transactions in the Office of Finance, is the organizational focus of the series. The diary entry for each day appears first, followed by the letters sent and received for that day. Morris was a busy entrepreneur called to public service who expressed himself with a directness, pungency, and candor that make his diary and letters fascinating to read. Moreover, he took as his assistant young Gouverneur Morris of New York, already famous as a stylist, polemicist, and wit. The combination of

Gouverneur Morris' eloquence with Robert Morris' judgment, so often admired in its day, still enhances the documents appearing in the edition.

The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781–1784, portray Morris' untiring efforts as Superintendent of Finance to strengthen the central Government under the Articles of Confederation and to define national priorities in light of national means. Working to stave off national bankruptcy, Morris strove to extract from a war-weary population funds sufficient to free the nation from dependence on foreign aid, largely from France, and to sustain the appearance of national strength and unity in the hopes of securing a favorable and lasting peace.

The Superintendent's primary objectives were to restore the confidence in government essential to the reestablishment of public credit and to vest powers in Congress adequate to deal with national issues. His policies posed important questions about the distribution of authority between the national and state governments under the Articles of Confederation, especially in matters of taxation and finance. They also aroused widespread fears of a powerful, centralized Treasury Department and resurrected charges of conflict of interest that had been raised during Morris' earlier service in Congress, when private and public business appeared to be intermingled. For his contemporaries, Morris' administration illustrated the difficulties of balancing the goals of national sovereignty and independence with the preservation of such revolutionary ideals as liberty, representative but limited government, local autonomy, and a virtuous republican social order.

Both Robert and Gouverneur Morris turned their efforts to combating foreign trade restrictions, penning eloquent arguments in support of the principles of free trade. They also incorporated commercial issues into their nationalist program for strengthening the Union. As Agent of Marine, Morris, despite his belief in the importance of a strong navy, presided over the virtual dismantlement of the American navy. In his private capacity, Morris became the principal backer of the first American commercial voyage to China, and restructured his national and international network of business partnerships.

Morris turned in his commission on November 1, 1784, then printed accounts of his entire administration and presented them to Congress for distribution to the states and others as Congress saw fit. Congress, then dominated by his opponents, declined to give Morris the appreciative resolution acknowledging his contributions as awarded to the other executive heads upon their departure. Instead, it called for an investigation of the accounts, failed to appoint the requisite commission, and left Morris and his administration under a cloud that followed him into the Constitutional Convention, the ratification debate, and Morris' later career as a U.S. Senator (all covered in the appendix to volume 9 of the Morris edition). Both volumes 8 and 9 are invaluable in depicting the economic problems and opportunities of the new nation at war's end, and document the political weakness of the Union that led to the calling of the Constitutional Convention. ❖

ELIZABETH M. NUXOLL, CO-EDITOR WITH MARY A. GALLAGHER OF VOLUMES 8 AND 9 OF *THE PAPERS OF ROBERT MORRIS, 1781–1784*, IS NOW ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF *THE PAPERS OF CLARENCE MITCHELL, JR.*



Portrait of Robert Morris by Charles Willson Peale. Photograph courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

ETHAN ALLEN *AND* HIS KIN

BY JOHN J. DUFFY



Marble statue of Ethan Allen by Larkin G. Mead, located in Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol. Photograph courtesy of the Architect of the Capitol.

When Ethan Allen, his brothers, cousins, and in-laws were settling on the New Hampshire Grants (present-day Vermont) in the early 1770s, a neighboring New Yorker declared the region “a refuge for the vagabonds and banditti of the continent.” Another New Yorker specifically noted the family’s arrival with Ethan at the head of “ten or twelve of the most blackguard fellows he can get.”

For more than 30 years after leaving Connecticut for the New Hampshire Grants, the Allen family bought and sold land; settled and developed towns; waged war; helped organize, defend, and nurture a new state; and conducted various businesses on the northern frontier. During those years, many other observers of Ethan, Ira, and Levi Allen, the most prominent of the five brothers, expressed a variety of judgments on their characters and abilities.

George Washington thought Ethan Allen was a spirited warrior, but not always trustworthy. Secretary of State Timothy Pickering warned American Minister Rufus King in England that Ira Allen was “infamous for his villainies.” Some of Ira’s own family thought him “as great a Villin as ev’r went unhang’d.” Levi Allen’s widow Nancy told the Lieutenant Governor of Quebec that her husband was insane when he neglected a Crown land grant she was then seeking to recover.

These contemporaneous assessments are clearly partial views of the Allen brothers and their families. Nearly 3,000 of their letters and other documents survive to fill out their story. Letters, of course, do not reconstruct the full life of their authors. In the story of the Allens, however, their letters are a rich source for details and textures of frontier life in the late colonial, revolutionary, and early Federal eras.

Ethan, Ira, and Levi Allen acquired the basic literacy available to them from parental teaching and an 18th-century Connecticut common school education. The Allens composed their letters on the northern frontier of New England with British Canada, while at war, under the immediate political pressures of legislative contests and diplomatic maneuvering, or in prison. They wrote in order to buy, sell, direct, persuade, cajole, inform, and even intimidate their correspondents. Their capacities as writers and the moment and impetus of composition are physically evident in their letters.

Except those few letters written by scribes or copyists, usually on state business, the roughness of the Allen letters (their unconventional spellings, excessive capitalization, and erratic punctuation) speak directly of the time and place. Ethan Allen did not go to Yale as his father intended, nor did Ira or Levi read the law in Litchfield. They were woodsmen, frontier rangers, tradesmen, and politicians with ambition, energy, greed, and some lively ideas. Many of their letters survive only in rushed, and thus fault-filled, copies.

While the Allens’ letters display men and women of expansive energy, ambition, skill, and wide interests, they also, of course, convey

such common human flaws as greed, consuming single-mindedness, and deceit. The dynamics of a large family whose members relied on each other for emotional support, physical care, and financial assistance, enliven this collection. Letters to, from, and between Ethan, Ira, and Levi Allen also clearly demonstrate the full extent to which family membership was central to the Allens’ efforts at settling, defending, and developing their land purchases and other commercial enterprises. Later, as their schemes to extend the Allen emporium to Canada and Britain unfolded after Ethan’s death in 1789, details of business and daily life filled Ira’s and Levi’s correspondence with each other, their spouses, and other close relatives.

The Allen family letters provide a variety of detailed, immediate views on 18th-century backcountry commerce as well as family life, including relations to centers of trade and power. Matters of export and import trade, including political maneuvering to assure access to Canadian and British products and markets, occupy many of the immediate postwar letters. The Allens’ ready mobility, expressed in their frequent tours to Canada, throughout New England, to New York, Europe, and the southern states, provided frequent occasions for letter writing by all of the brothers. The politics of acquiring land in Quebec by Crown grants, speculative probes into the Niagara country and Upper Canada, and the intricacies of contested ownership in Vermont and the Wyoming district of Pennsylvania during an era of intense land speculation, were also major topics of the letters.

Vermont’s role in the Revolution and the ensuing dispute with New York State and the Continental Congress over independence or statehood are prominent topics in the early letters, for Ethan and Ira Allen figured largely in these events. The Frederick Haldimand Papers in the National Archives of Canada contribute a body of correspondence between the Allens and British officials during the last years of the American Revolution concerning secret negotiations ostensibly to establish a temporary truce for prisoner exchanges.

Ira Allen later claimed, however, that the hidden purpose of those negotiations was to forestall a second British invasion of the Champlain Valley to avenge Burgoyne’s defeat at Saratoga in 1777. According to Ira, this end was accomplished by Ethan, Ira, and Jonas Fay deceiving their British and Loyalist counterparts with ambiguous prospects of Vermont’s joining the Empire. At the same time, Ethan and Vermont’s Governor Thomas Chittenden allayed George Washington’s suspicions that the Allens corresponded treacherously with the enemy. Postwar Haldimand-Allen letters also detail free-trade issues between a then-independent Vermont and Canada.

Written over a period of nearly 50 years, the Allen letters repeatedly display the family’s skills at linking the interests of government with its own commercial welfare. While only a few letters survive from the pre-war years of the early 1770s, the rhetoric of those letters reflects Ethan’s general tactics of neutralizing by intimidation any New York effort to extend jurisdiction in the New Hampshire Grants, a campaign that helped sustain the original New Hampshire land titles and ultimately the value of the Allens’ extensive credit-financed land investments.

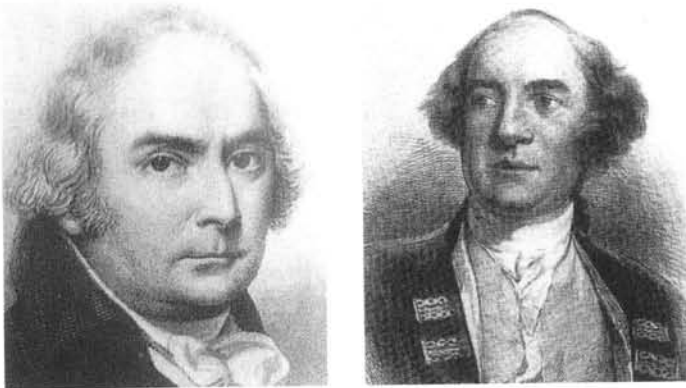
Before violent conflict erupted in Massachusetts between British troops and rebellious colonists during the spring of 1775, the Allens had concocted a scheme for the Grants to be a separate colony with wealthy British army veteran Philip Skene governing from his desmesne at the head of Lake Champlain. After petitioning London in early 1775, Skene was commissioned governor of Ticonderoga and Crown Point and obtained partial approval for a new province, pending a popular vote of approval from the settlers.

The Allens quickly realized that a military action against Fort Ticonderoga could advance both American political interests against the Crown and the Grants settlers' claims for a political identity independent of New York. When Ethan Allen and his irregular militia, the Green Mountain Boys, accepted a Connecticut proposal to seize Fort Ticonderoga and control the strategic Albany-Montreal route through Lake Champlain, they tied the Grants to the American independence movement. Moreover, they also elevated a regional dispute into a larger controversy that involved the Congress and ultimately preserved the Allen brothers' land interests.

After the war, as the brothers extended their holdings and began trading with Canada, the Allens' correspondence reveals their "Grand Plan" to expand trade through the Lake Champlain-St. Lawrence corridor to the Atlantic and Europe. Then, in the late 1790s, letters record Ira's attempt while in England to convince the British Home Office of the necessity for, and his willingness to construct a navigable canal around the shoals of the Richelieu River at St. Johns to connect Lake Champlain with the St. Lawrence.

When the British showed no enthusiasm for the canal project, Ira left London, crossed the English Channel, and somehow persuaded the French Directory to sell him 20,000 muskets, plus several field guns and other equipment. Documents retrieved from French archives show that these arms, later seized by a British man-of-war from the ship *Olive Branch*, were central to Ira's plot with the Directory to annex Canada by force to a seceded Vermont and establish the democratic republic of United Columbia out of a "revolutionized British America."

The Allens display a broad variety of interests and purposes in these post-Revolution letters. Ira Allen not only speculated in land, but also built mills and forges in the Champlain valley, and founded the University of Vermont. While imprisoned in Paris as a suspected British spy during a second trip to France, he even drafted a proposal to the Directory for a canal to connect the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Ethan's letters, written mostly in the public business



LEFT: Ira Allen (1751-1814). Miniature by an unknown artist, 1793. Fleming Museum, University of Vermont. Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries. RIGHT: Frederick Haldimand (1718-1791). Etching by Albert Rosenthal after the portrait by Joshua Reynolds. Photograph courtesy of Special Collections, University of Vermont Libraries.

of land disputes, politics, and war, display well-tuned rhetorical skills of persuasion and intimidation.

Farmer, miner, frontier hunter, and soldier, Ethan seemed to thrive on polemics. He published a Deist book and several political pamphlets and broadsides on the New York and Wyoming Valley land disputes, and sought a charter for a Philosophical Society from the Vermont General Assembly to promote debate. He once wryly complained about living in Burlington to his friend, the lawyer Stephen R. Bradley, with a Biblical pun about the boring cattle-centered conversations of Vermont farmers, "They glory in the gad." Table talk in

the British officers mess at Quebec was banal, he told John Wheelock, president of Dartmouth College.

Many of the Allen family letters survive because they were Ira's or Levi's business records or were produced on government business. Few letters by women of the Allen family have survived, but those we have treat important details of women's lives on the northern frontier. Great distances from families and friends, their intrepid willingness to travel, and the boring loneliness of life in small settlements are topics of letters by Jerusha Allen, Nancy Allen, and Nancy's sister Betsy Coit to their absent spouses or families in Connecticut. Despite the legal restraints on women dealing in property, Jerusha's business acumen speaks clearly in her letters, and she vividly reported news of the day to her sons. As college students they were perhaps less receptive to the solid good sense of her advice about their health, study habits, and spending money.

Written in consistently direct personal tones, the letters of the Allen women make us regret their scarcity. A letter from Nancy to Levi in London, for example, is so personally expressive that her last words form the most winning closure of these letters: "I tell you my thoughts as they arise, and Heaven knows they contain nothing amusing. God give you success and a Safe return is the Ardant wish of your Friend Nancy Allen."

The Allens' letters illustrate the instability of the late-18th-century American frontier. For example, the brothers' letters provide interesting details to fill out the story of Vermont's early relations with British Canada. "They make no scruple of telling me that Vermont must either be annexed to Canada or become Mistress of it," Quebec's Governor General Frederick Haldimand wrote of the Allen brothers in 1783.

Repeatedly between 1780 and 1800, the Allen letters show how the brothers' faith in that assertion never wavered. On national levels, American interest in the acquisition of Canada, the tension between Lower Canada's French-Canadian population and its British government, and across-the-border ties in commerce and politics all figured in Ira's ability to convince the Directory of France to support a revolutionary annexation of Canada to an independent Vermont.

For 30 years after the Revolution, Americans struggled to create a political, social, and economic framework that would hold their nation together. It was never preordained that the efforts to sustain the new nation would succeed. The frequent incidents of backcountry unrest—Shays' Rebellion; the Whiskey Rebellion; the drive for political autonomy in Vermont and the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, and elsewhere; the filibustering of men like William Blount, James Wilkinson, and Aaron Burr—all posed serious threats to state and Federal authority. The Allens' attempts to make their family's priorities the goals of Vermont's independent and state governments, their adaptation of the rhetoric of the Revolution for postwar use, their disregard for British sovereignty over Canada, and their dogged search for wealth and power through land speculation, backwoods intrigue, and rebellion make them fascinating northern New England counterparts to the Blounts, Wilkinsons, and Burrs of their generation.

Support for the Allen letters project was provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the State of Vermont, the Vermont Council on the Humanities, the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, Chittenden County Historical Society, the American Philosophical Society, the Windham Foundation, the Freeman Foundation, and the Henderson Foundation. ❖

JOHN J. DUFFY OF ISLE LA MOTTE, VERMONT, IS THE EDITOR, WITH RALPH H. ORTH, J. KEVIN GRAFFAGNINO, AND MICHAEL A. BELLESILES, OF *ETHAN ALLEN AND HIS KIN: THE CORRESPONDENCE, 1772-1816* (UNIVERSITY PRESS OF NEW ENGLAND: HANOVER, NH, 1998).

letter to Abigail in August 1777. "Mr. Lawrence . . . is a great acquisition . . . of the first Rank in his State, . . . of ample fortune, of great Experience, having been 20 years in their assembly, of a clear Head, and a firm Temper, of extensive Knowledge, and much Travel. . . . I wish that all the States would imitate this Example and send their best Men."

Laurens' opinion of Congress was not as complimentary. Washington's army suffered mightily from lack of supplies. Shortly after Laurens took his seat in Congress, the British threatened Philadelphia. Frustrated by the lack of direction during this crisis, he wrote one of his South Carolina confidants, "you will not wonder that I wish to be any where but in Congress."

Rather than leave, Laurens accepted the chair and served as president of Congress from November 1777 to December 1778. The British had taken Philadelphia in September 1777. Congress met in York, Pennsylvania, until late June 1778, when the British evacuated Philadelphia. Laurens and Congress were faced with numerous issues related to problems in Washington's army at Valley Forge. Shortages of clothing, food, and military supplies led to discontent and desertions among the troops and to the resignation of scores of officers. Angered and disillusioned by the officers' scramble after pay, rank, and pensions, President Laurens demanded that his son John, a volunteer officer in Washington's military family, serve without pay in the best republican tradition.

Despite the rankling and the shortages, some positive events took place during these months: word reached Congress of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, the Articles of Confederation were completed and sent to the states for approval, the Franco-American alliance was formed, and England declared war on France. But the great issues Laurens and Congress faced sometimes went unresolved, while petty bickering and factional disputes absorbed the time and energies of the delegates.

Laurens, both during his tenure as president and then for another year as a delegate, was frequently drawn into these personal and factional clashes. His papers reveal a lack of patience with clerks, secretaries, and other functionaries of the Congress and a festering mistrust of anyone he suspected of profiting from the conflict. Laurens' resignation from the presidency, which took place on December 9, 1778, resulted from a controversy over American diplomat Silas Deane's mixing of public and private business while in Europe. When Congress refused to endorse his resolution to inquire into Deane's behavior, Laurens resigned. His intense sense of republican duty and personal honor often made his behavior appear extreme.

In October 1779, Congress appointed Laurens a commissioner to represent the United States in loan and treaty negotiations with the Dutch. He returned to South Carolina in December 1779 to arrange his affairs and seek passage on a vessel to Europe. Early in 1780, the British invaded his native state, laid siege to Charleston, and in May forced the city's surrender. Laurens' correspondents in and around Charleston, including his son John, who served under the American commander, Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, kept him informed of every enemy movement. While he did not witness the invasion, his papers contain some of the best observations of the events leading to the fall of Charleston.

His plans interrupted by the invasion, Laurens headed north, seeking a vessel to carry him to Europe. When he did finally sail in late August 1780, it was from Pennsylvania aboard the brigantine *Mercury*. His life changed dramatically on September 3, 1780,

when the British frigate *Vestal* captured the *Mercury* on the high seas. Transported to England, he was charged with high treason and held in the Tower of London for 15 months.

During that time, many old friends, including Richard Oswald and William Manning, visited him as unofficial agents of the administration. They tried to persuade him to renew his allegiance to Britain in return for more favorable treatment and possible release. Laurens refused these enticements. Despite his steadfast refusal to succumb to these "feelers" from the British, he did seek relief in a petition to Parliament.

On December 31, 1781, the British released Laurens on bail; they freed him completely on April 26, 1782. Some members of Congress, including James Madison, raised questions about his conduct in the Tower and openly doubted his loyalty. The majority of members did not hold these suspicions; they selected Laurens as a peace commissioner in June 1781, and refused to accept his resignation in the summer of 1782.

As a member of the American peace commission, Laurens shuttled back and forth between Britain and France. He made some minor contributions to the preliminary treaty by providing support for the American positions concerning fishing rights, the removal of property by the evacuating British forces, and the compensation of Loyalists for confiscated property. But Laurens spent only a few days in Paris with Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and John Jay, the other American commissioners. Most of his time in France during 1782 and 1783 was spent visiting his family and friends. While he did sign the preliminary peace on November 30, 1782, he was not present for the signing of the definitive treaty in September 1783.

Laurens actually did more diplomatic work in England than in France. During the period between the preliminary and final peace agreements, acting with the support of the other commissioners at Paris, he employed his many commercial and political connections in an unsuccessful campaign to remove impediments the British had raised against American imports. He was frustrated by the British administration's refusal to make any concessions. Shortly before he left England in 1784, Laurens warned an American correspondent, "Whatsoever they do unto you in their commercial Regulations so do unto them, this is the Law, & the Wisdom of Nations."

When Laurens finally arrived in South Carolina in January 1785, he immediately returned to private life. His home and plantations had to be rebuilt after the destruction of the war. He refused offers of high office, including that of governor. He declined when elected as a delegate to the 1787 Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia, insisting that his health, ruined by the months in the Tower, would not permit him to serve.

An outspoken supporter of the movement to strength the national government, he attended the ratification convention in Charleston and voted with the Federalists. Elected to the 1790 South Carolina Constitutional Convention, he begged off by informing the governor that his "whole frame greatly debilitated by long and continued sickness" made it impossible for him to travel. Despite declining health, and preoccupation with personal affairs, Laurens' correspondence continued to include observations on the government, economy, and society of postwar South Carolina and America. He died on December 8, 1792, at his Mepkin plantation on the Cooper River. ♦



Engraving by Cbevillet after the portrait of Benjamin Franklin by Joseph-Siffredé Duplessis. Photograph courtesy of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin

ZEALOUS PARTISAN

BY JONATHAN R. DULL

On February 24, 1783, Benjamin Franklin wrote to thank a former professor named Jean-Pierre d'Azarq for two odes.

The poems are no longer extant, but we know that they praised liberty, of which, confessed Franklin, he was a zealous partisan ("dont je suis sans doute un zélé partisan"). Franklin's letter, to be published on pages 607-8 of the forthcoming Volume 36 of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, is an explicit statement of an often neglected but central aspect of

the first American minister plenipotentiary to a foreign court. Benjamin Franklin was as ardent a revolutionary as any of the patriots of 1775-1783, and to ignore his zeal is to misunderstand him.

The public record of his service is impressive. Elected to Congress the day after his return from England, just 2 weeks after the Battle of Lexington, he served in Philadelphia for the next year and a half (except for journeys to Cambridge, Staten Island, and Montreal on Congress' behalf). He then began an almost 8-year mission to the French court, during which he served as commissioner, minister plenipotentiary, and peace commissioner and helped negotiate the 1778 Franco-American treaties of commerce and of alliance, the 1782 preliminary peace agreement with Great Britain, and the 1783 final peace treaty. Nonetheless, Franklin has been tarred by his colleague John Adams' accusations of indolence and self-indulgence.

Fortunately for Franklin, the bulk of his correspondence during his French mission is extant; it will fill 20 volumes of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (the 14th of which is about to be published, thanks in large part to the generous and long-standing support of the NHPRC). As important as were the great negotiations with the French and British courts, they comprise only a small fraction of the correspondence.

Most of the letters deal with the routine matters that even today burden American diplomatic missions: the constant demands of Americans overseas for assistance and the adjustments of conflicting interests with foreign governments. Franklin's task was much more difficult, however. He had a minuscule staff (no more than three secretaries at any time, one of them his grandson). Communication with his home government was difficult at best. He was faced with myriad onerous requirements, such as verifying and cashing loan office certificates. Perhaps worst of all, he was plagued with a constant fear that his financial credit would be exhausted and he and his country disgraced.

Admittedly, there were compensations. His health was endangered not by hunger, but by gout aggravated by too rich a diet. The dinner parties he attended, however, had a purpose that seems to have eluded Adams, that of reassuring the French aristocracy that American revolutionaries were not bearers of a libertarian contagion that might (and eventually did) threaten them. Franklin was serious when he described himself as an old man oppressed with too much business (*Franklin Papers*, 36: 465).

The quality of his correspondence is even more revealing than its quantity. The constituents to whom he devoted the most energy were American sailors captive in English prisons, such as Forton Prison in Portsmouth and Old Mill Prison in Plymouth. He sent money to help them survive their imprisonment, assisted those who had escaped, and even outfitted privateers to try to capture British sailors to exchange for them. The mistreatment of prisoners was an example of what Franklin considered the inhumanity of King George III and his government. One might suspect, from his repeated references to English bloodthirstiness, that what gave Franklin his energy was rage. (He never mentions, however, the personal wound inflicted on him by the British, the adherence to Loyalism of his once-adored son William.)

Even Franklin's weaknesses as a diplomat are those of an over-zealous patriot. In writing to Americans like Robert Morris, Franklin, still in some sense a Boston puritan, may criticize Americans for wasting money on frivolities, but his criticisms seldom go any deeper. One gets the impression he believed the American cause to be totally righteous and American conduct of the war totally proper and virtuous.

His smugness led him into some serious mistakes. He viewed with disdain the taking of security precautions; hence the American mission was full of spies. This hindered communication with the French, who understandably did not discuss war strategy with him. Unlike Adams, he did not devote serious study to statecraft, and this led him into other mistakes, such as not doing more to block the impolitic doomed mission of Francis Dana to St. Petersburg.

Many of Franklin's strengths predate the revolution. His cosmopolitanism, discretion, and talent for conciliation were exceptional. It is difficult to imagine anyone else doing as well at obtaining from France the financial aid so vital to sustaining the American cause. This "softer side" of Franklin does not mean, however, that there was not a hard inner core that sustained him during his lengthy and difficult mission. That core seems to have consisted in an unshakable belief in the American cause and a hatred of its enemies. ❖

JONATHAN R. DULL IS SENIOR ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE PAPERS OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.

LETTERS OF DELEGATES TO CONGRESS 1774-1789

BY RONALD M. GEPHART

The Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789, project at the Library of Congress ended in July 2000 with the publication of the 26th and final volume, a cumulative index. Volumes 1-25 of the series, published between 1976 and 1998, include all known correspondence written by 344 delegates who served in the Continental Congress from its inception in August 1774 through July 1789, when the records of that body were turned over to the Federal Government under George Washington.

The series grew from the Library's effort to celebrate the bicentennial of the American Revolution by establishing a publication program to make its Revolutionary War collections better known. The staff assembled in 1969 to prepare guides and bibliographies was composed, at various times, of Donald Cresswell, Gerard Gawalt, Ronald Gephart, James Hutson, Rosemary Fry Plakas, Robert Rutland, John Sellers, Eugene Sheridan, Paul Smith, and Patricia Molen Van Ee. Within a decade they had produced *Manuscript Sources for Research on the American Revolution*; *The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints: A Checklist of 1765-1790 Graphics in the Library of Congress*; *Maps and Charts of North America and the West Indies, 1750-1789*; *Revolutionary America, 1763-1789: A Bibliography* (2 vols.); the papers from a half dozen annual symposia; John Paul Jones' *Memoirs*; Gideon Olmsted's *Journal*; and select publications of letters and pamphlets.

The Letters of Delegates project was first proposed in 1969 when the staff working on the guide to manuscripts discovered in the Manuscript Division many congressional letters that had not been published in Edmund C. Burnett's ground-breaking *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* (1921-36, 8 vols.). At first, they proposed publishing a supplement to Burnett's edition. But a preliminary

search of other institutions revealed so many additional letters that the Library's Bicentennial Advisory Committee (John Alden, Julian Boyd, Lyman Butterfield, Jack Greene, Merrill Jensen, Cecilia Kenyon, Aubrey Land, Edmund Morgan, Richard Morris, and George Rogers, Jr.) recommended that an entirely new edition be published. They envisioned the project as an addition to the documentary publication projects of the letters of the Founding Fathers begun in 1950 with *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*.

The project was made possible by a 1970 grant of \$500,000 from the Ford Foundation to begin the search for documents. In all, 23,000 documents were uncovered, although internal evidence demonstrates that this figure represents only an estimated 10 percent of what the delegates actually wrote. For a host of reasons, the remainder did not survive. Approximately 20 percent was found in the Manuscript Division's collections, with another 20 percent coming from the holdings of the National Archives. The remaining 60 percent came from more than 400 archives, libraries, historical societies, and private owners throughout the United States and abroad.

Paul Smith was the editor of the project for 25 years from 1971 until he retired in 1996 with the completion of the final textual volume. He was ably assisted in transcribing, editing, and publishing this vast trove of documents by four assistant and then associate editors: Gerard Gawalt, Rosemary Fry Plakas, and Eugene Sheridan (volumes 1-10), Gawalt and Ronald Gephart (volumes 11-20), and Gephart (volumes 21-25). The project was also well served by five excellent editorial assistants during the 30 years of its production: Alice McKay, Barbara Calder, Nancy Becker, Joyce Howland, and Staley Hitchcock.

The volumes are arranged in chronological order. Depending on the amount

of correspondence, each volume chronicles anywhere from a few months to more than a year's worth of material. Hundreds of significant findings were made during the course of research that altered prevailing views. Two examples may suffice. By comparing letters and diaries dated July 4, 1776, with often-cited notes that Thomas Jefferson wrote long after that day, Paul Smith found Jefferson to be in error. Rather than adopting the Declaration of Independence during an afternoon session on a "hot" Fourth of July, as Jefferson later recalled, the delegates actually ratified the document earlier that morning, on a noticeably "cool" day. Smith's article, "Time and Temperature: Philadelphia, July 4, 1776," was published in 1976 in the *Quarterly Journal of the Library of Congress*. Similarly, Ronald Gephart uncovered the authorship of two pseudonymous essays published in 1783 in support of a strong central government. The essays had originally been attributed to James Madison. But Gephart revealed in a 1997 article, "Who Wrote 'The North American' Essays?" published in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, that they were actually penned by Madison's junior colleague from Virginia, James Francis Mercer.

Advances in computer technology aided the editors during the last dozen years of the project. They were able to send printer-ready copy of the last third of the series on disc to the Government Printing Office. By scanning the early indexes, which had been produced on traditional 3-by-5-inch card stock, and converting them to machine readable form using a set of complex macros, it was possible to compile a 4-million-byte cumulative index to the series with expanded cross-references and qualifiers not found in the individual volumes. Such a compilation was made possible through the use of the new Macrex software, developed in England,

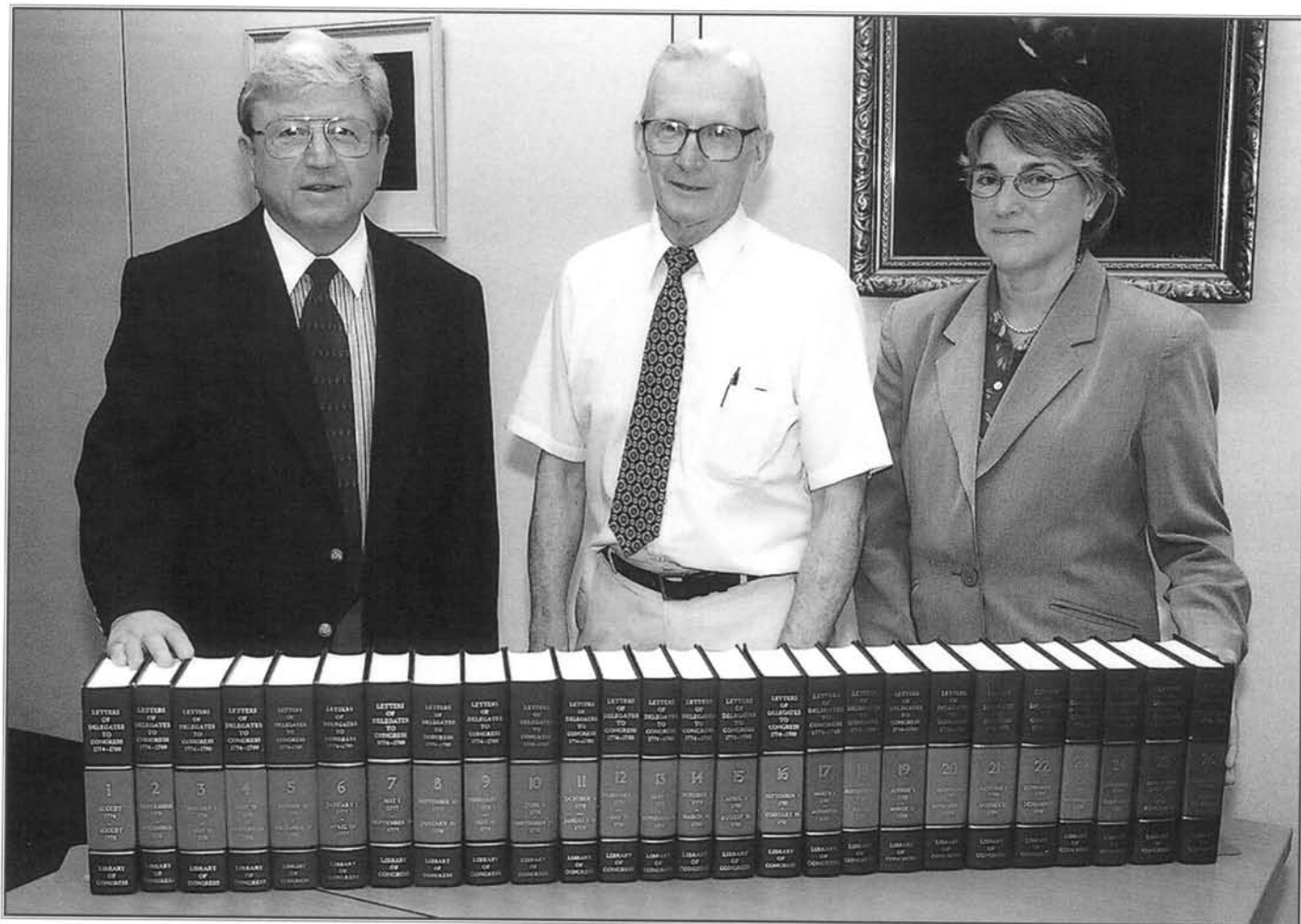
which permitted global comparisons of the entire file for errors in alphabetization, inconsistencies in spelling and dating, the use of abbreviations and diacritical marks, ambiguities in wording and word structuring, and problems in cross-referencing.

A digital version of volumes 1-25 that includes its own search engine has been produced on CD-ROM and distributed

The Letters series has attracted much critical and scholarly attention over the years. In his review in *Ohio History*, Robert Hay of Marquette University called the Letters "one of the most noteworthy and useful series to have appeared in the past 100 years of historical editing and publishing in America." J. Edwin Hendricks of Wake Forest University said in his recent review in the *Journal of Southern*

for Excellence in Indexing for the cumulative index from the American Society of Indexers in June 2001 (awarded jointly to Gephart and Smith).

From its inception, the project was clearly a team effort that involved the work of archivists, librarians, and historians in Washington, DC, and throughout the United States. The editors are also acutely aware that the 26-volume project



Associate Editor Ronald M. Gephart, Editor Paul H. Smith, and Evelyn Sinclair of the Library of Congress Publishing Office (left to right) with the completed set of Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789. Photograph courtesy of the author.

by Richard Dodge of Historical Databases in Summerfield, Florida. It is the first time that a major historical editing project had been available in a fully searchable electronic database as well as traditional print format. The Library of Congress is preparing an Internet version of the *Letters* series for its American Memory web site, which already includes related materials, such as the Library's *Journals of the Continental Congress* (34 vols.), comprising the official record of congressional proceedings.

History that "the *Letters of Delegates* has become the standard by which scholarly editions of early American letters and documents are measured." The series has also won several awards, including the Lyman H. Butterfield Award from the Association for Documentary Editing in 1988 (awarded to Paul Smith), the Thomas Jefferson Prize for documentary editing from the Society for History in the Federal Government in 1998 (awarded jointly to Smith and Ronald Gephart), and, most recently, the H.W. Wilson Award

could not have been completed in 30 years without the vast resources of the Library of Congress. ❖

RONALD M. GEPHART, WHO RETIRED FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS IN 2000, SERVED AS ASSISTANT AND ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE *LETTERS OF DELEGATES* SERIES.

THE CARROLL FAMILY OF MARYLAND



Portrait of Charles Carroll of Carrollton by Joshua Reynolds, 1763. Photograph courtesy of the Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

*M*y graduate school advisor, the late Merrill Jensen, originally raised the idea of my editing Charles Carroll of Carrollton's papers after reading the first draft of my doctoral dissertation. Expressing enthusiasm for the rich insights provided by the Carroll letters, Merrill strongly urged me to consider preparing an edition of the documents. Several years later, Jack P. Greene, who reviewed my manuscript on the Revolutionary era in Maryland for publication by the Johns Hopkins University Press, found the Carroll material similarly impressive and suggested to me that the family's correspondence should be made available both to scholars and to the broader community of readers interested in early American history.

After the publication of my study on the Revolution in Maryland, however, I became engaged in other projects. My interests were now directed elsewhere irrevocably, I thought, in particular to a study of the lower south during the War for Independence. But I had underestimated the tenacity of this Irish family. The Carrolls had a far firmer hold on my attention than I realized.

My initial awareness that the deeply intimate character of the Carrolls' papers make them unique among the correspondence that survives for their era eventually persuaded me that they did indeed merit publication. The only comparable set of letters are those of the Laurens family, but the run of those documents is relatively short. By contrast, the Carroll Papers have extraordinary range, from the early 18th through the early 20th century. For the Revolutionary period they are, quite simply, priceless.

The correspondence between Charles Carroll of Carrollton (Charley) and his father, Charles Carroll of Annapolis (Papa), forms the core of the collection for the years 1749-1782. Commencing when 11-year-old Charley is sent to be educated in France, these manuscripts document the 16 years of his schooling and growing up abroad, his return to Maryland in 1764, and the tumultuous times of the Revolution, and end with the death of Papa, always Charley's closest confidant and most constant correspondent. Between 1782 and 1832, the letters flow from Charley's pen to reveal his experience as the patriarch of a growing family with social ambitions and material demands that contrast remarkably with the challenges

THE REVOLUTION

BY RON HOFFMAN

he and Papa confronted during the Revolutionary era.

The first three-volume installment of the Carroll Papers, entitled *Dear Papa, Dear Charley*, is scheduled to be published this year. The contents document the richly textured, deeply intimate history of a family whose social and psychological dimensions were often explicitly tragic, illuminate the personal and public issues with which its members contended, and offer telling perspectives on the prominent business and political figures with whom the Carrolls associated.

Equally important, the letters furnish a dramatic and compelling portrait of the dangers the Revolution posed for men of considerable wealth. Although initially enthusiastic about the cause of independence, Charley soon recognized how deadly the game of Revolution could be as disorder threatened to destabilize the social order upon which fortunes like his depended. The letters father and son exchanged during the war years constitute a fascinating portrayal of how a Revolutionary elite struggled to accommodate itself to what Charley called the country's "vengeful Democracy."

Over the years, as I prepared these letters for publication, I began to recognize another compelling dimension that drove my interest in the Carroll story. Although Charles Carroll of Carrollton is perhaps best known for being the only Roman Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence, the society in which he eventually came to prominence did not always welcome his presence.

By the time of his birth in 1737, Catholics had been without political power and civic rights in Maryland for almost two decades. The colony had implemented a number of the dreaded penal laws that had broken Catholic landowners in England and Ireland, thereby denying Maryland's Catholics the vote and the ability to hold public office, practice law, maintain schools for their children, and worship publicly. At mid-century, the lower house of the proprietary assembly mounted a concerted attack on Catholics' rights of inheritance. By 1760, 10 of Maryland's 20 largest fortunes were held by Catholics, but their religious adherence made these families, the richest of whom were the Carrolls, objects of envy, easy targets for scapegoating in times of political and social tension, and, most alarmingly, vulnerable to threats of dispossession.

Unlike some of their co-religionists, who sought to ameliorate the situation by changing their religion, Papa and Charley refused to compromise their religious and cultural heritage. That legacy, born of an atavistic obsession with ancient wrongs and conveyed through generations of conscious and subconscious cultural memory and tradition, spurred these Carrolls in their quest for the power and security that Charles Carroll of Carrollton finally managed to achieve in the world made by the American Revolution.

Nor does the drama end in 1782. Unlike Thomas Jefferson, who discerned salutary effects in the occasional revolution, Charles Carroll of Carrollton had no interest in revisiting the turmoil and disorder endemic to the years between 1775 and 1783. Instead he devoted the rest of his life to consolidating the gains his family had wrested from the Revolutionary experience.

Committed to assuring that neither his fortune nor his family's place in the new republic would ever again be menaced by revolutionary upheaval, Carroll embraced the opportunities for making money that the new nation offered. His wealth allowed his progeny to launch themselves into prominence on the national and international scene. Among them, none outshone the triumph of Carroll's granddaughter, Mary Ann Caton Patterson, whose marriage to Richard Colley Wellesley, second earl of Mornington and viceroy of Ireland, took her back, as vicereine, to the land in which the bitter legacy that shaped her family had been forged.

I consider it a rare privilege to be able to prepare for publication the documents that tell this remarkable tale. ❖

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COLONEL JAMES MONROE & THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

War, Ambition, Patriotism, and Symbolism

The American Revolution

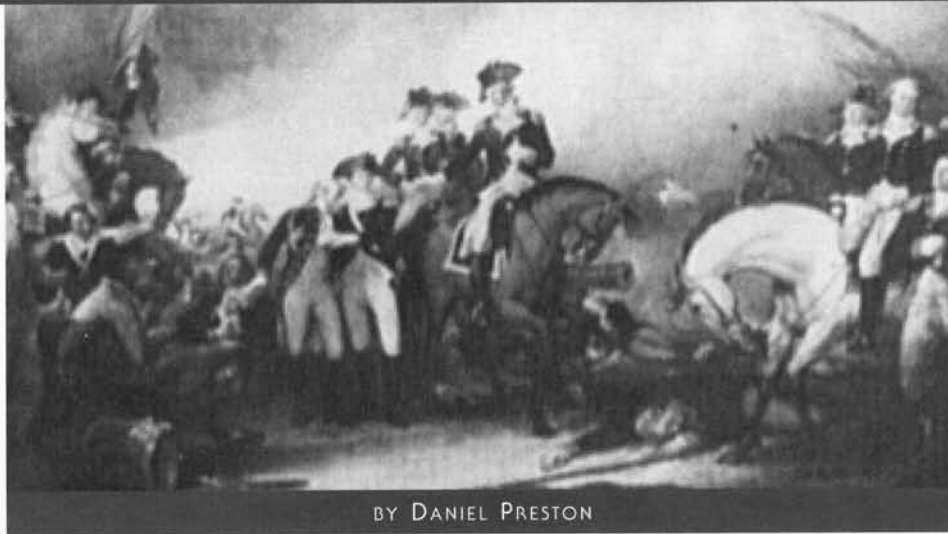
was one of the great cataclysmic events in history, not only for the United States, but for the world in general. Many of the participants in the Revolution were historically conscious, and were aware that their revolution had

the potential to alter the course of history. And, of course, they were aware of the impact that the Revolution would have on their own lives. James Monroe, who served as an officer in the Continental Army, wholly subscribed to these notions, viewing the American Revolution not only as a defining event in history, but as the defining event of his life.

At first glance, Monroe's involvement with the American Revolution seems rather elementary: he joined the army in 1775 and served throughout the war as an officer in the Continental Army and the Virginia militia. But if we look more carefully, we will find a much more complex dynamic that lasted throughout Monroe's life. In reviewing this relationship, we can see not only what the American Revolution meant to Monroe, but also what it meant to Americans of his era. We may also glean some insight into how Monroe tried to use that understanding to promote the welfare of the country.

When fighting broke out in April 1775, James Monroe was a student at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and still several weeks shy of his 17th birthday. Curiously, the details of his activities during the first year of the war are murky. Records for those months are sketchy, and Monroe never wrote very much about his own activities during the Revolution. His entry into revolutionary activity came on June 24, 1775, when he, along with a group of fellow students, raided the Governor's house in Williamsburg, seized a stockpile of arms stored there, and delivered them to the local militia. There is fairly conclusive evidence that Monroe served as a lieutenant with the 2nd Virginia Regiment at Norfolk during the winter of 1775-1776, but the official records of the regiment list no such officer.

We know that Monroe went home to northern Virginia in February 1776 and was appointed lieutenant in the 3rd Virginia Infantry Regiment. But we do not know much beyond that. We do not know where in northern Virginia he was stationed, nor if he accompanied the regiment during its attack on the British encampment at Gwyn's Island. The record does not become clear until August 1776, when the 3rd Virginia left the state to join Gen. George Washington's army at New York. Shortly after their arrival, Monroe and his regiment participated in the battles



BY DANIEL PRESTON

The Capture of the Hessians at Trenton, by John Trumbull. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

at Harlem Heights and White Plains and in the retreat from New York to Philadelphia.

The most important moment of Monroe's wartime

service came during Washington's famous attack at Trenton in December 1776. Monroe, as part of the advance guard, crossed the Delaware the evening before the attack and secured the roads into Trenton. During the battle, he was severely wounded while leading a charge against the Hessians. By all accounts, Monroe would have died of this wound had he not received prompt medical attention. As it was, the musket ball was too deeply embedded in his shoulder for the doctor to remove it, and Monroe carried it with him for the remainder of his life. The young officer was promoted to captain and, as was the practice, sent home on recruiting duty while he recovered from his wound.

On his return to the army in August 1777, he was promoted to major and assigned to the staff of Gen. William Alexander (Lord Stirling). He was present at the Battles of Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth, and spent the winter at the army's encampment at Valley Forge. Although Monroe was devoted to Stirling, he chafed under his staff duties and longed for reassignment to regimental duty. The Continental Army had more officers than it had men to command, however, and there was no field command available for Monroe.

The 20-year-old veteran resigned his commission in the Continental Army and returned to Virginia, where he was appointed colonel of one of the four new regiments authorized by the Virginia assembly. This appointment was shortlived, however, for the assembly soon realized that it had neither the men nor the money necessary to create four regiments, and Monroe's command disappeared. Despite all his efforts, he was unable to get another command. Monroe's dedication to the American Revolution was absolute, not just to the creation of an independent nation, but to the creation of a nation based upon a set of revolutionary ideals. He remained loyal to these ideals throughout his subsequent political career, repeatedly affirming his attachment to the political institutions that had been championed by the revolutionaries: representative government, a written constitution, an educated and patriotic citizenry, disestablishment of religion, abolition of nobility, and a disdain for monarchy.

At the same time, Monroe, like many other young men who espoused the cause, realized that the Revolution offered an

opportunity for personal advancement. This was particularly important for Monroe, who saw the Revolution and service with the army as a means of social advancement, as a way for him to advance from the lower gentry, to which his family belonged, to the front ranks of Virginia society. Monroe was an extremely ambitious person, and was able to turn his wartime experience to his advantage.

In the early 1780s, Monroe used the assets he had, including the prestige of having been an army officer, to launch his political career. In April 1782 he was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates. Shortly thereafter, he was appointed to the Governor's council, and the following year, in June 1783, was chosen to represent Virginia in the Continental Congress. Monroe moved easily from a military to a political career, with his service in the Continental Army being the first step in a long climb that led to the pinnacle of power and influence.

Monroe was firmly devoted to the ideals of the Revolution. He was not alone in this reverence for it was a commonly held sentiment throughout the country. Knowing this, he was able to make great political use of the symbolism of the Revolution to promote both his own political career and his political program of national unity. Because his record was so well known and because he was readily identified with the Revolution, he could make oblique references to his service and have them understood.

One way he did this was with his clothing. Monroe frequently wore a blue coat, buff-colored vest, tan trousers, and riding boots, an outfit that closely resembled the uniform of a Continental Army officer. One newspaper editor noted in 1817 that persons who saw the President in this garb "remembered that the wearer was a soldier of the revolution, and had profusely shed his blood more than forty years ago, to establish the independence of that country over which he now has the honor to preside." This added a special aura to Monroe and to his Presidency. Monroe knew that this aura and his image as a veteran added to his popularity, and being a master politician, he knew that popularity was power. Throughout his life he was pleased to be addressed as Colonel Monroe.

One of Monroe's chief aims during his public life was to promote national unity. He was painfully aware that the differences among the states created animosities that had the potential to destroy the Union. The Constitution created an institutional framework that held the states together and, as an embodiment of the political ideals of the Revolution, served as a powerful symbol of national unity. But Monroe saw the Revolution itself as being an even more powerful symbol, and repeatedly used such symbolism to promote the union of the states.

In his use of symbolism, Monroe contributed to an emerging national myth surrounding the Revolution. He presented it as a unified national movement, the implication being that all Americans supported the Revolution, and all Americans were descended from the revolutionaries. This wasn't true, and Monroe knew that it wasn't. But national myths are powerful tools. Most Americans claimed kinship with the Revolution, and Monroe sought to use their attachment to the "Glorious Cause" as a means of binding them together. He succinctly stated all this in a single sentence of a speech that he gave at Bunker Hill in July 1817: "The blood spilt here roused the whole American people and united them in a common cause in defense of their rights; that union will never be broken."

Shortly after he became President in 1817, Monroe embarked on the first of several national tours. In every town that Monroe visited, from Baltimore to Portland, from Portland to Detroit, and from Detroit back to Washington, he was given a hero's welcome, greeted not only as the President of the United States, but as a patriot who had shed his blood during the Revolution. John Trumbull's painting of the Battle of Trenton portrays young Lieutenant Monroe lying wounded on the ground: during his own lifetime Monroe had become part of the iconography of the Revolution. And in practically every town he visited, he met with other veterans of the Revolution, both officers and enlisted men. "We were embarked in the same sacred cause of liberty," he told Society of Cincinnati members at Boston, "and we have lived to enjoy the reward of our common labors."

A second instance of Monroe using the symbolism of the American Revolution to promote national unity came in 1824. At the time, the United States was in the midst of an extremely bitter Presidential contest, with a host of candidates battling for the right to succeed Monroe as President. The chief executive was disturbed by all this acrimony, fearing that his efforts to end political discord would be negated. Unable to intervene directly, the subtle politician took another course. In early 1824, he suggested that Congress invite the Marquis de Lafayette to visit the United States.

Lafayette, one of the few remaining heroes of the Revolutionary War, was esteemed not only for his service in America and his close relationship with George Washington, but also for his valiant efforts to promote the ideals of the American Revolution in Europe. Monroe rightly figured that Lafayette's presence as a symbol of the unity of the American Revolution would counteract the divisiveness engendered by the election. Lafayette's reception at the President's House was well scripted; not only was the President dressed in his proto-Continental Army uniform, but he had the members of his cabinet dress the same way. Together, Monroe and Lafayette, the two wounded heroes of the Revolutionary War, presented a powerful image of national pride and unity.

However, in the long run symbols were not enough. Although his testimony to the American Revolution as a common heritage touched a chord deep within the psyche of the American people, it was not enough to overcome the distrust and animosity that eventually erupted into armed conflict. Monroe, being an experienced politician, used a vast array of other political weapons in the battle to maintain national unity. But being an experienced politician, he knew that symbols were powerful weapons, and that without them the battle would be lost before it began. Throughout his life, Monroe remained true to the script he wrote for himself as a symbol of the American Revolution, even down to dying on the 4th of July 1831. ❖

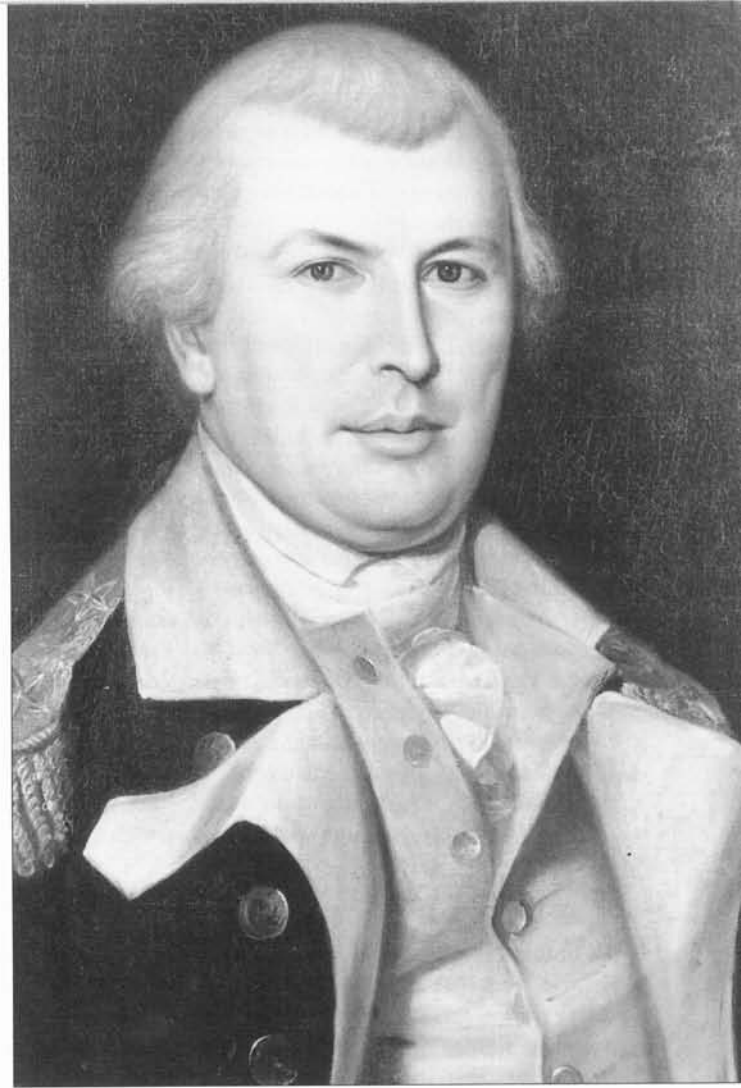
DANIEL PRESTON IS THE EDITOR OF THE PAPERS OF JAMES MONROE, A PROJECT AT THE JAMES MONROE PRESIDENTIAL CENTER OF MARY WASHINGTON COLLEGE. IN 1991, THE NHPRC PROVIDED A PLANNING GRANT TO THE PROJECT, WHICH IS PLANNING A SELECTIVE EDITION OF MONROE'S PAPERS. THE FIRST TWO VOLUMES OF THE SERIES, *A COMPREHENSIVE CATALOGUE OF THE CORRESPONDENCE AND PAPERS OF JAMES MONROE*, APPEARED IN 2000 FROM GREENWOOD PRESS. MARLENA DE LONG AND HEIDI PAULSON HELPED IN THE PUBLICATION OF THIS ARTICLE.

Surviving Fire, Storm, and the Garbage Collector



THE PAPERS OF GENERAL NATHANAEEL GREENE

BY DENNIS CONRAD



Nathanael Greene is one of the greatest, yet least known, figures of the American Revolution and of American history in general. In 1775, at age 32, Greene sprang from relative obscurity as a Warwick, Rhode Island, anchorman and small merchant to become the youngest general in the Continental Army. Although lacking in previous military experience, he became successively Washington's ablest brigade and division commander, quartermaster general of the army, and commander of the Southern Department, leading his army to victory over the British in the Carolinas and Georgia in 1781 and 1782. Greene's early death in 1786, at the age of 43, may explain why he has never been accorded his rightful place in the pantheon of Revolutionary heroes.

Greene's most important contribution to the American cause was his service as commander of the Southern Department. The war in the South is one of the least understood aspects of the Revolution. Most Americans do not realize how close this country came to losing the war in that part of the nation. Before Greene arrived in the lower South in late 1780, the Americans had lost two armies, had had two states, Georgia and South Carolina, overrun by the British, and faced losing a third, North Carolina, which was on the brink of collapse. In addition, the British had a force in Virginia preparing to launch a campaign to subjugate that state.

In less than a year, Greene was able to reverse the situation and push the British

back, so that by the end of 1781 their area of control in the lower South was confined to the environs of Savannah, GA, and Charleston, SC. Greene and his army were responsible for driving Lord Cornwallis and his troops into a position in Virginia that made them vulnerable to capture at the siege of Yorktown, the event that is credited with breaking the British will to continue the war. Moreover, Greene achieved this remarkable turnaround while leading an army that was chronically, and often desperately, short of men and supplies.

Historians of the period have long acknowledged Greene's role in winning the War for Independence. He has been called the greatest strategist ever produced by America. One author has written that he anticipated by some 150 years the "revolutionary" strategy and tactics of Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

The story of the publication of Greene's papers is also remarkable. Greene was aware of the significance of his letters to the history of the newly independent nation, and appreciated the variety of disasters that could befall them and deny them to posterity. During the war, the general's papers were involved in several near-disasters. In April 1776, Greene's brigade was en route from Boston to New York. Transport vessels sailing from

Portrait of Gen. Nathanael Greene by Charles Willson Peale. Photograph courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

New London encountered a storm that swept baggage from the deck of one vessel and turned several others back to port. That same year, when Cornwallis made a surprise landing near Fort Lee, NY, Greene had only minutes to gather up his papers and evacuate the fort. Near the war's end, the general returned to his quarters near Charleston, SC, to find his office ablaze. Fortunately, the fire was extinguished before his papers were destroyed, but other materials, including many of the army's copies of the Journals of Congress, were lost.

Greene did make efforts to preserve his papers. During the last months of the war, he assembled his surviving documents and filled two trunks with some 6,000 items of a personal and official nature. He was concerned that Congress should have copies of the papers. On his return to his native Rhode Island in 1783,

he stopped at Princeton, where Congress was in session, and on November 1 wrote to President Elias Boudinot that:

The letters and miscellaneous papers containing a history of the most material parts of the Southern operations may contain some things which Congress or their officers may hereafter have occasion to refer to. Loose files are easily disordered and where recourse is often had to them papers often get lost.

If Congress should think it an object worthy the expence and would indulge my wishes, I should be glad to get the whole papers transcribed into bound books. Having taken the liberty of suggesting my wishes I shall be happy to take the trouble of directing the business if Congress will be at the expence of a Clerk to do the writing.

On the same day, Congress ordered Secretary Charles Thomson to furnish Greene with a clerk. In 1785 Greene hired Phineas Miller, a young Yale graduate, to tutor his children and transcribe his papers. At the time of Greene's death in June 1786, Miller had barely started copying the documents. Interestingly, Miller later married Greene's widow, but for a variety of reasons, never got more than a handful of Greene's letters copied.

Threats to Greene's papers continued after his death. One group of letters from his time as quartermaster, which Greene had left with his deputy, Charles Pettit, was sold as wastepaper when Pettit died in 1806. These papers were saved only because a Philadelphia publisher, Robert DeSilver, retrieved them and gave them to Charles Caldwell, who was working on a biography of Greene. In 1835, DeSilver sold another batch of Greene's papers to the State Department of the United States, writing that he had taken them from "an old Barrel of rubbish."

Over the course of the next century, various descendants attempted to pick up the task of collecting and transcribing the letters in the spirit of the congressional resolution to create a fitting memorial to Greene. Nathanael's grandson, George Washington Greene, assumed

responsibility for publication of the general's letters. Initially proposing a six-volume work in 1847, Greene encountered difficulties: too few subscribers, delays, and broken promises. By 1867 he had found a publisher for a three-volume biography of his grandfather, in which he included many important letters. Bitterly discouraged, he abandoned hopes of realizing the publication of his grandfather's complete papers, commenting that "after a full trial both of publishers and of Congress . . . the letters . . . must still be left to the chances of fire and damp, of moth and mice, of autograph fanciers, and descendants too full of themselves to remember their duty to their ancestors."

He did show the papers to the trustees of the Rhode Island Historical Society, who indicated they would be pleased to have the collection as a gift. But times were hard in postwar Georgia, and the letters constituted an asset that the heirs could not afford to give away, so in 1894 the family sold the collection, constituting some 5,500 of Greene's letters, to a New York autograph dealer, Joseph Sabin, for \$5,000. Between 1894 and 1920, Sabin and his son sold approximately one-third of the collection at one time or another. Hundreds of these letters have never reappeared. The remaining two-thirds were kept together until they were purchased in the 1920s by William L. Clements. Today they constitute the core collection of the Greene Papers at the William L. Clements Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

In 1971, the director of the Rhode Island Historical Society proposed the publication of a letterpress edition of Greene's papers, the "bound books" of correspondence whose creation Nathanael Greene had desired and Congress had endorsed. The Clements Library cosponsored the proposed project. The Historical Society applied for and received funds from the National Historical Publications Commission (later the NHPRC), which it was able to match with money that it raised locally. A search was then begun, which continues to this day, during which some 10,000 letters to and from Greene were discovered.

The local money that helped to launch

the project also had an interesting history. In 1901, Nathanael Greene's remains were accidentally unearthed in Georgia. Feeling that the Georgians had not done enough to honor their greatest native son, a group of Rhode Islanders raised a fund to finance the removal of Greene's body to his native state and to construct a suitable monument at the proposed Rhode Island gravesite. A delegation representing this group traveled to Georgia, where they met with officials who succeeded in convincing the Rhode Islanders that the memorial they had planned in Savannah, where Greene's body would be reinterred, was suitably grand to honor the memory of the hero.

The delegation returned to Rhode Island and the money that had been collected was placed in a bank. There it remained until 1971, when members of the Greene family were able to convince the directors of the Greene Memorial Fund that the proposed papers project would fulfill the charge of the originators of this fund to create a suitable monument for Greene. That fund became the local "seed" money that helped start the project.

A few years later, after that money had been exhausted, the Rhode Island legislature assumed the burden of helping to fund the project. With this money and the unfailing support of the NHPRC, as well as the less steady, but nonetheless significant help of the National Endowment for the Humanities, Greene's papers, not only of his command in the South but of his entire life, have been collected and published. As the 13-volume project now nears completion, it is fortunate that dedicated individuals and the NHPRC have seen fit to retrieve Greene from his obscurity and to make available his papers, which have literally survived fire, storm, and the garbage collector. ❖

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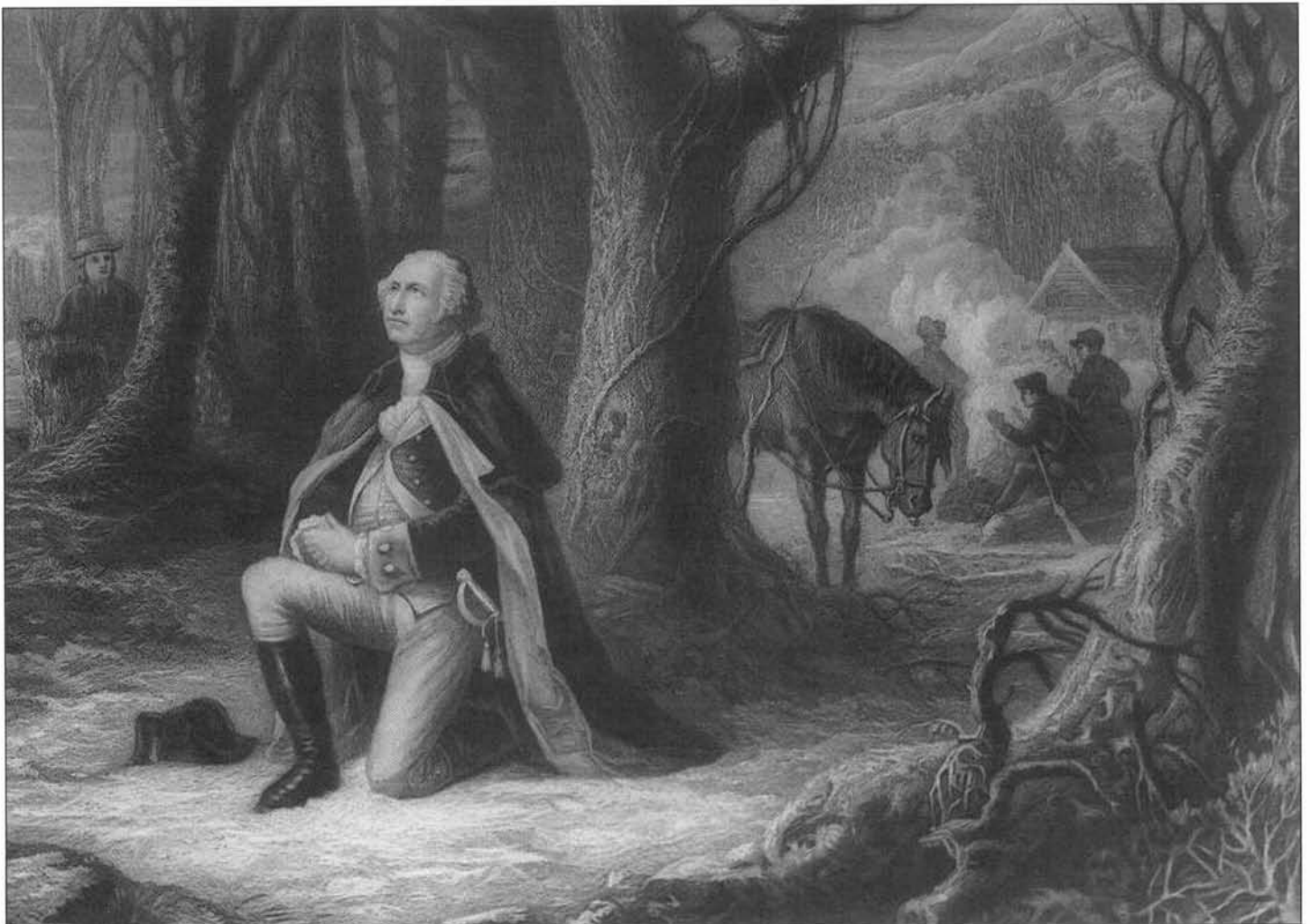
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The Prayer at Valley Forge, engraving by John C. McRae after a painting by H. Brueckner. Photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.