LEWIS NICOLA, a distinguished citizen and Revolutionary soldier of Pennsylvania, was probably born in France in 1717, of Huguenot stock. It appears that in his youth he emigrated to Ireland where he received his education. In or after 1766, he left Dublin to go to Philadelphia, Pa., where he was naturalized a citizen on November 18, 1769. About five years later he was appointed justice of the Court of Common Pleas of Northampton County, Pa., residing there with his wife and children. Though he had held an appointment in the British army for twenty-six years prior to his coming to America, when the Revolution broke out he warmly and wholeheartedly espoused the cause of the Colonies. From April 20 to December 2, 1776, he served as barrack-master of Philadelphia, a post he resigned to become Town Major in command of the "City Guards." He continued in this command to February 5, 1782. Meanwhile, he joined the famous Patriotic Association of July 17, 1778, taking the oath of allegiance to the State on March 30, 1779. In the United States Army he served as major, colonel, and brigadier general, his commission to this last rank being dated November 27, 1783. Throughout the Revolution, Nicola was also colonel in command of the Veteran Invalid Corps which Congress had authorized on June 16, 1777, and he served in this capacity to December 30, 1784. Finally, on December 23, 1788, Nicola was raised to the rank of commandant of the Corps of Invalids.

The Library of the New York Historical Society has in its pos-

session four unpublished letters of Lewis Nicola to Horatio Gates and three to William Alexander which he (Nicola) wrote in his capacity of Colonel in command of the Veteran Invalid Corps. Colonel Nicola’s letters are interesting not only because they help to make clear the rôle he played in the American Revolution, but also because they shed additional light on several prominent personalities of Revolutionary fame. To gain a fuller appreciation of his military career, these letters should be studied together with the orders Nicola issued as Town Major in command of the “City (Home) Guards,” Philadelphia Militia. This writer has found some of Nicola’s orders in the local Philadelphia newspapers of the period. Since these orders are not readily available in most American libraries, they are included in this paper.

The spelling, punctuation and syntax of the original orders and letters have been preserved in this paper. They are here arranged in chronological order.

Headquarters in Philadelphia, February 8, 1777.

A particular return from each corps to be delivered to Major General Gates at Headquarters every Saturday morning at nine o’clock, signed by the commanding officer. Any commanding officer, neglecting to obey this order, must expect to be put in arrest, to answer for his conduct.

Lewis Nicola, T. Major.

All the continental troops in this city and the barracks off duty are, without exception, to parade in the commons near the barracks on Saturday morning next, precisely at ten o’clock.

All prosecutions and evidence against any of the military pris-

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2 Horatio Gates (1728-1806). Military Commander. Commissioned adjutant-general with the rank of brigadier-general by Washington. Forced Burgoyne to surrender at Saratoga, October 17, 1777. Congress voted him a gold medal and the thanks of the country and placed him at the head of the board of war, which made him second in rank to Washington. On August 16, 1780, Gates was defeated at Camden, N. J.

3 William Alexander (1726-1783). Revolutionary soldier, better known as "Lord Stirling." He sided with the patriots in the Revolutionary War, and was made a colonel in 1775. For his bravery in capturing a British armed transport, Congress made him a brigadier-general in 1776. In the same year, he was promoted to major-general for another act of bravery. He was one of the founders and the first governor of King's College, New York City.

4 Pennsylvania Evening Post (Towne), Feb. 8, 1777.
oners, are to attend at the General Court Martial which is to sit on Wednesday morning in the barracks.

March 3, 1777.

Lewis Nicola, T. M.5

Philadelphia, August 7, 1777.6

Wanted in the regiment of invalids, a drill sergeant and corporal. Any persons well qualified to fill those offices, and that are willing to engage, may apply to the subscriber in Front Street, Philadelphia, four doors below the London Coffee-House.

Lewis Nicola, Colonel.

Nicola to General Horatio Gates7

[Philadelphia] 1778

Sr.

When I had the pleasure of seeing you last at Easton8 you were so kind as to express a desire of hearing from me. I can not miss the present occasion of returning you thanks for our restoration to this city,9 an event principally brought about by the transactions of the last years northern campaign, tho probably neither you or Genl. Burgoin,10 when putting pen to paper at Saratoga, conceived you were signing a treaty of amity & alliance between America & France & yet it is certain the latter was in a great measure owing to the former.11

1Ibid., March 4, 1777. 6Ibid., Aug. 23, Sept. 2, 1777.

7MS. in New York Historical Society. Early in 1778, General Gates was ordered to take command of the troops in the northern department, and to make such a disposition of his means, as effectually to secure the passes of the highlands on the North River. [Paul Allen, A history of the American Revolution. II, 175.]


9Congress, which had moved its session to Yorktown when Sir William Howe took possession of Philadelphia, returned to the latter city, as soon as it had been evacuated by Sir Henry Clinton. [Allen, op. cit., II, 185.]

10John Burgoyne (1722-1792). In 1777 he was at the head of the British reinforcements designed for the invasion of the colonies from Canada. In the disastrous expedition he gained possession of Ticonderoga (for which he was made a lieutenant-general) and Fort Edward; but, pushing on, was detached from his communications with Canada, and hemmed in by a superior force at Saratoga. On Oct. 17, his troops, about 3,500 in number, laid down their arms. The success was the greatest the colonists had yet gained, and proved the turning point in the war.

11In April 1778, Simeon Deane arrived at Yorktown, with copies of the treaties which had been signed at Paris with Louis XVI. The treaty of commerce had been signed on January 30, and that of alliance on February 6. [Allen, op. cit., II, 177.]
No military history can, I believe, show such an extraordinary desertion as has prevailed in the British army since it left this city, from the best information I can get it was not more than ten thousand strong, & many doubt its amounting to that number, yet it must have lost at least fifteen hundred men by desertion only previous to last sundays action, upwards of five hundred have passed through my hands & Genl. Washington, in a letter¹² wrote last saturday says about six hundred had arrived to his camp to which must be added a large number engaged by the inhabitants of the Jerseys without going to camp or coming here, from what deserters & others say I believe four hundred will be a moderation computation, a deserter come in since I began this letter says he is the only one of ten, who left the british army the night after the battle, that is come to Philadelphia.

Great preparations are making here to celebrate the anniversary of independance, & thirteen cannon were fired yesterday for the return of Congress to Philadelphia where they were to have met by adjournment, but the president is not yet arrived.

Be so kind to make my comp.s acceptable to Mrs. & Mr. Gates & do me the justice to believe me with respect

Sr.

Your most obedt.

Servt.

(Signed) Lewis Nicola.

Notice is given to the inhabitants of Philadelphia that the Honorable Congress does not expect they will illuminate their houses tomorrow evening.

Lewis Nicola, T. M.¹³

Friday, 3 July, 1778.

Nicola to General Horatio Gates¹⁴

28 July, 1778.

Sr.

I had the honour to write to you some time since to return you

¹² A search made to locate this letter has proved unsuccessful. It is not found in J. C. Fitzpatrick, Calendar of the Correspondence of George Washington . . . with the officers. 1915, 4 vols.
¹³ Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser (T. Dunlap), July 4, 1778.
¹⁴ MS. in New York Historical Society.
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23 Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser (T. Dunlap), July 4, 1778.

14 MS. in New York Historical Society.
thanks for our return to this city, an event to which I am persuaded you have principally contributed, least my letter should have miscarried, as I sent it by an officer going to the army, permit me to repeat my acknowledgements by a french gentleman going to your quarters that I met at the Coffee house. As our eyes are all bent to your quarter I cannot have any thing interesting to communicate, unless it be that things here are just as they were when I had the pleasure of being under your command, three days work to collect a general court martial for to morrow & yet uncertain whether I can accomplish it, two men under sentence of death for desertion to be executed the day after to morrow.

Be so kind to make my comp. to Mrs. & Mr. Gates & do me the justice to believe me with respect.

Sr.

Your most humle. & obedt. Servant

(Signed) Lewis Nicola

Philadelphia, July 28th 1778.

Order and notice advertising the arrest of deserters from the Continental army; reward of 13 dollars (total) for the arrest of deserters.

(Signed) Lewis Nicola, Town Major.

Nicola to Gen. Horatio Gates

Fishkill, 19 Septr. 1781

Sr.

I have the pleasure of inclosing a letter from our friend Kosciuszko which takes a great circuit to reach you.

You will probably be surprised at finding my letter dated from this place as I had not the least expectation of coming so far north when I last had the pleasure of seeing you. The occasion of our coming was, I presume, owing to his Excy. Genl. Washington having his present expedition in view & being desirous to leave

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15 Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser (T. Dunlap), July 3, 1779.
16 MS. in New York Historical Society.
17 Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746-1817). Left Poland in 1777 for America where he became an aid-de-camp of Washington. In 1783 he was made a general.
as strong a garrison as possible in West Point ordered the Invalids there, but Genl. Mc. Dougle, who command at the Point, has stationed us in the outposts in this neighborhood & called in the troops that were in them.

Genl. Heath, who now commands in this part of the world, is encamped about three miles on this side Peekskill with the New England troops.

Arnold has made an excursion into Connecticut & burned a considerable part of New London, what further mischief he has done or intends to do, we are not yet informed. This is all the news I can send you from this place.

Be so kind to present my respects to Mrs. Gates & accept the same from

Sr.
Your most obedt Servt.
(Signed) Lewis Nicola.

Nicola to Wm. Alexander
Fishkill, 16 May 1782.

My Lord

Doubtful whether the badness of the weather will permit your

18 West Point, the site of the United States Military Academy, situated in Cornwall township, Orange County, N. Y., on the west bank of the Hudson, 52 miles north of New York City. Fishkill, the town from which Nicola wrote this letter, is in Dutchess County, 62 miles north of New York City. The natural strength of West Point led to its selection for a fortress in the Revolution, and the ruins of Fort Putnam, which was erected at that period, crown a hill of 598 feet elevation above the river.

19 Alexander MacDougall (1732-1786). Revolutionary agitator and soldier. Appointed colonel of the First New York Regiment, June 30, 1776; brigadier-general, Aug. 8, 1776, and major-general, Oct. 20, 1777. A delegate to the Continental Congress, 1780-82 and 1784-85; was elected minister of marine, but resigned from Congress in 1785 to resume military duties.

20 William Heath (1737-1814). Revolutionary soldier. Born in Massachusetts. Member of the General Assembly in 1761 and in 1771-74; member of the provincial congress of Massachusetts, 1774-75. In 1774 he was commissioned provincial brigadier-general. On the organization of the Continental army in 1775, he was commissioned brigadier-general, and in Aug. 1776, was made major-general.

21 Peekskill, Westchester Co., N. Y., on the east bank of the Hudson River, 17 miles below Newburg, and 42 miles north of New York.

22 Benedict Arnold (1741-1801). Revolutionary patriot and traitor. Born in Connecticut. In 1781 Clinton sent Arnold on a marauding expedition to New London, Conn. Although he is probably not to blame for the massacre of the American defenders at Fort Griswold, he may fairly be charged with responsibility for the burning of New London, which was an unforeseen result of his intentional setting fire to the public buildings there.

23 MS. in New York Historical Society.
Lordship going to the Connecticut Hutts\textsuperscript{24} this day, I request you will permit your servant, in case you go, to call at my quarters & I shall be ready to wait on you.

Would not Fishkill be more convenient to meet at for your Lordship & Genl. Hand,\textsuperscript{25} if so you may command my room in the barracks.

I have the honour to assure your Lordship that I am with respect

\begin{center}
My Lord
Your most obedt. Servt.
(Signed) Lewis Nicola Co. Inv.
\end{center}

Nicola to Wm. Alexander\textsuperscript{26}
Fishkill, 29th June 1782

Dr. Sr.

I am favoured with yours of 20th. inst. & beg you will, with my respects, inform Lt. Sterling\textsuperscript{27} that I shall punctually attend at the hour & place appointed. I am further to request you will acquaint his Lordship that I have been obliged to put Lieut. George Boss\textsuperscript{28} of the Invalid reg. under arrest for Behaving disrespectfully to me, & on many occasions unbecoming a gentleman, and for disposing publick flower [sic] for his private use.

Believe me

\begin{center}
Dr. Sr.
Your most obedt. Servt.
(Signed) Lewis Nicola Co. Inv.
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{24} During 1781 and 1782 the Connecticut troops wintered at Fishkill, New York. The land they occupied was called Connecticut Village, and several orders mention the "Connecticut Hutts" or "Huts." [Connecticut Adjutant-General's office. \textit{Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the Revolution.} Hartford, 1889, 302, 303, 306, 307.]

\textsuperscript{25} Edward Hand (1744-1802). Physician and Revolutionary soldier. In 1776, was made lieutenant-colonel, served in the siege of Boston under Washington, and participated in the battle of Long Island and in the New Jersey campaign. In 1777 he was promoted brigadier-general. In 1780, he was appointed adjutant-general on the staff of General Washington.

\textsuperscript{26} MS. in New York Historical Society.

\textsuperscript{27} Probably Lieutenant Stirling in the Maryland Loyalists.

\textsuperscript{28} George Boss. Ensign Second Pennsylvania Battalion, July 4, 1776; ensign and adjutant, Fourth Pennsylvania, Jan. 3 to June 30, 1777, and from Dec. 17, 1777 to May 17, 1780; lieutenant, June 4, 1778; transferred to Invalid Regiment, Jan. 29, 1781; sentenced to be discharged, Sept. 13, 1782.
Nicola to Wm. Alexander
Fishkill, 3 Aug. 1782.

My Lord,

I find myself under the necessity of reporting to your Lordship that I have this day put Capt. Reiley of the Invalid regt. under arrest

For ungentleman & unofficer like behaviour, by asserting upon his honour a falsehood [sic] and opposing a civil officer in the execution of his duty.

I have the honour to assure Your Lordship that I am with respect

Your Lordship
Most Obede. Serve.

(Signed) Lewis Nicola Col. Inv.

Nicola to General Horatio Gates
Fishkill, 21 Februy. 1783

Sr.

Inclosed I send you the paper I promised, for your personal & that of the other generals in your neighborhood.

Tho I left you so early I did not get home 'till sunset, owing to his Excellency not being at home, about two hours delay at the ferry 'till the tide turned, one on the passage, execrable roads & when near my quarters obliged to ride four or five hundred yards up to my saddle skirds in water.

Should you see Genl. Putnam I beg you will tell him I sent his memorandum to one of our officers on Constitution island with directions to send the Genl. the information he desired.

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29 MS. in New York Historical Society.
30 John Reiley. First lieutenant Twelfth Pennsylvania, Oct. 1, 1776; captain, May 20, 1777; transferred to Third Pennsylvania, July 1, 1778; wounded at Bonhampton, N. J., April, 1777; transferred to Invalid Regiment, Aug. 12, 1780, and served to June 24, 1783.
31 MS. in New York Historical Society.
32 Israel Putnam (1718-1790). Promoted lieutenant-colonel and took part in command of his regiment in the successful expeditions of General Amherst against Ticonderoga and Crown Point, in 1759 and against Montreal in 1760. In 1764 was promoted colonel. Later, appointed brigadier-general by the legislature. Declared allegiance to the cause of the colonies. In 1775, was made major-general in the Continental army.
33 Constitution Island is a promontory opposite West Point, connected with the mainland by a marshy meadow. [J. H. French, Gazetteer of the State of New York. Syracuse, 1860, 542.]
With comps. to Mr. & Mrs. & the gentlemen of your family I beg you will do me the justice to believe me with respect,

Sr.

Your most obedt. Servt.

(Signed) Lewis Nicola Col. Inv.

CONTRIBUTORS

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