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QUAKER PATRIOTS: THE LEADERSHIP OF OWEN BIDDLE AND JOHN LACEY, JR.

TWO CENTURIES ago, the trauma of revolution provided an unprecedented crucible for many Americans, testing their inclinations, beliefs, and backgrounds. No group of individuals was more sorely tried than that of the Society of Friends. The Friends, or Quakers as they are commonly called, had experienced serious religious schisms before the Revolution,¹ but few of their membership had questioned the central nonpacifist credo of their particular persuasion until the outbreak of open conflict at Lexington and Concord in April 1775.

This dramatic event precipitated a profound crisis within Quaker ranks. Between 1775 and 1783, twenty Monthly Meetings in southeastern Pennsylvania alone,² with a membership of over 8,000, expelled 420 belligerent Friends.³ Residing in the original counties of Philadelphia, Chester, and Bucks, the area of the

1. Rufus M. Jones, *The Quakers in the American Colonies* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), pp. 446-458; Gary B. Nash, *Quakers and Politics, Pennsylvania, 1681-1726* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 146-161, 179-180, 295-296; Jon Butler, "Gospel Order Improved: The Keithian Schism and the Exercise of Quaker Ministerial Authority in Pennsylvania," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 21 (July 1974): 431-452.

2. Monthly Meetings formed the second lowest level of four organizational strata within the Society of Friends (Preparative, Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly). Functions of the Monthly Meetings included appointing trustees to hold titles to meeting houses and other property, keeping graveyards, supervising marriages, providing aid for the indigent, communicating with other Monthly Meetings, and, most significantly for the nonpacifists, reproving improper conduct of members. Sidney V. James, *A People Among Peoples, Quaker Benevolence in Eighteenth Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 7-8.

3. In addition, 16 Friends were expelled for joining the British Army, while 15 of the original 420 changed sides in the conflict, were attainted for treason, and had their property confiscated. Monthly Meeting Minutes: (Philadelphia County) Abington (1774-1782, 1782-1797), Gwynedd (1767-1779, 1779-1786), Philadelphia, Northern District (hereafter referred to as Philadelphia, N.D.) (1772-

Society of Friends greatest concentration, these recalcitrant individuals violated the basic pacifist precept of their religion by taking up arms in the cause of American independence.⁴

Two exceptional leaders among these 420 militants were Owen Biddle and John Lacey, Jr. Owen Biddle was a worthy representative of a distinguished Pennsylvania family. His great-grandfather, William Biddle, brought the family to New Jersey in 1681, two years prior to Penn's arrival in Pennsylvania. Owen's grandfather, the second William Biddle (1660-1743), who had immigrated with his parents, became a large landowner and public official. John Biddle, Owen's father, together with his brother William, moved to Philadelphia about 1725, where John prospered as a merchant.⁵

Both Owen and his younger brother Clement (1740-1814) held the rank of colonel during the struggle for independence. Clement was Owen's superior for three years as commissary general of forage in the Continental Army (1777-1780).⁶ Ann Biddle (d. 1807),

1781, 1782-1789), Philadelphia, Southern District (hereafter referred to as Philadelphia, S.D.) (1772-1780, 1781-1792); (Bucks County) Middletown (1754-1781), Richland (1767-1786) (microfilm), Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.; *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: State Printing Office, 1896), 10: 482-483; Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of Loyalists of the American Revolution* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1966), 1: 292, 304, 487, 488, 494; 2: 548, 598, 600; Jack D. Marietta, "A Note on Quaker Membership," *Quaker History*, 59 (Spring 1970): 42. Unfortunately, these membership figures are for 1760, not 1775-83.

4. A study has already been made to assess the possible motivations of these combatants, and the conclusions favored patriotism as a prime motive, while their economic and social backgrounds revealed little that would induce them to violate the salient pacifist belief of their faith. Kenneth A. Radbill, "Socioeconomic Background of Nonpacifist Quakers during the American Revolution" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arizona, 1971). This study does not include those Friends who were disowned for holding office in the revolutionary government in Pennsylvania or for taking the mandatory oath of affirmation and allegiance to that government, nor does it include those who served in the revolutionary forces as noncombatants (driving supply wagons, repairing gun carriages, etc.). A complete description and statistical breakdown of these individuals is given in Arthur J. McKeel, "Quakers in the American Revolution," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1939).

5. Paul A. Gay, *Genealogy of the Biddle Family*, (Philadelphia, Pa.: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1933); William W. Hinshaw, *American Quaker Genealogies* (Philadelphia and Falls Monthly Meetings), (Richmond, Ind.: Friends Book and Supply House, 1936), 2: 337, 464-465; John Biddle, Letters, 1744, 1751, Biddle MSS, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.

6. Gay, *Genealogy of the Biddle Family*; Hinshaw, *American Quaker Genealogies*, 2: 337, 464-465; Owen Biddle Letter Book, 1775-1780, Biddle MSS, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, Pa.; Free Quaker Records, American

Owen's youngest sister, married the infamous General James Wilkinson, Aaron Burr's machiavellian associate. Owen's younger cousin, Charles Biddle (1745-1821), served as a major in the Continental Army. Another of Owen's cousins, Charles' younger brother, Nicholas (1750-1778), was captain of the ill-fated frigate *Randolph*, lost at sea in 1778 after a fierce engagement with the British frigate *Yarmouth*.⁷ Perhaps the best known member of the large Biddle clan was the second Nicholas Biddle (1786-1844), Charles Biddle's third son, who, as the President of the Second Bank of the United States (1823-1836), fought the long, disastrous "Bank War" against President Andrew Jackson.⁸

Owen, the eldest of five children, was born in 1737. After eight years of formal education, he remained in Philadelphia and took up the trade of watchmaker. In 1760, he married Sarah Parke of nearby Downingtown, and within two decades, fathered ten children. Several years before the Revolution, Owen ventured into the shipping trade, but fared badly and was eventually compelled to declare bankruptcy.⁹

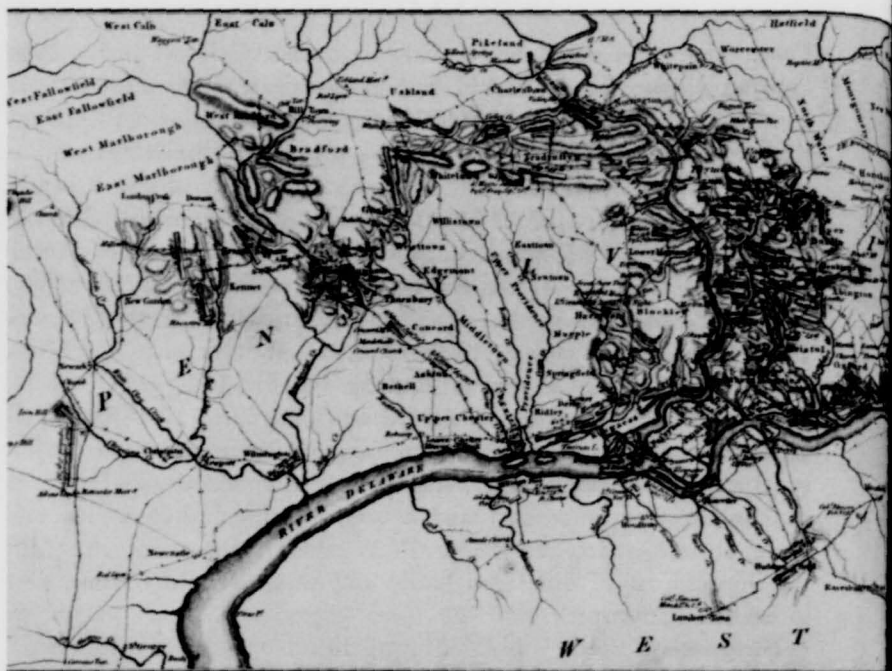
Fortunately, Biddle's political and military endeavors met with greater success. Owen was evidently attuned to the political events of his time, and did not hesitate to act when he felt that the situation justified radical measures. His political activism was evident as early as 1765 when he became one of the original signers of the non-importation resolutions, drawn up in retaliation against the hated Stamp Act. In January 1775, he was a delegate to the Provincial Conference, a radical convention convened in Pennsylvania to consider the necessity of independence from Great Britain. Biddle's extremist politics and persistent activity as a colonel in the militia ultimately resulted in his expulsion from the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting on 26 October 1775, after confronting his

Philosophical Society Records, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pa.; Mekeel, "Quakers in the American Revolution," p. 273; Charles Wetherill, *History of the Free Quakers* (Philadelphia: By the author, 1894), p. 19.

7. Gay, *Genealogy of the Biddle Family*; Monthly Meeting Minutes: Philadelphia, S.D. (1772-1780), pp. 231, 239, 242-243; Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842, Biddle Mss, Friends Historical Library; Henry D. Biddle, "Owen Biddle," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 16 (January 1892): 299-309; James R. Jacobs, *Tamished Warrior, Major General James Wilkinson* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1938), pp. 53, 59-60.

8. Gay, *Genealogy of the Biddle Family*.

9. Ibid.; Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia), 19: 242.

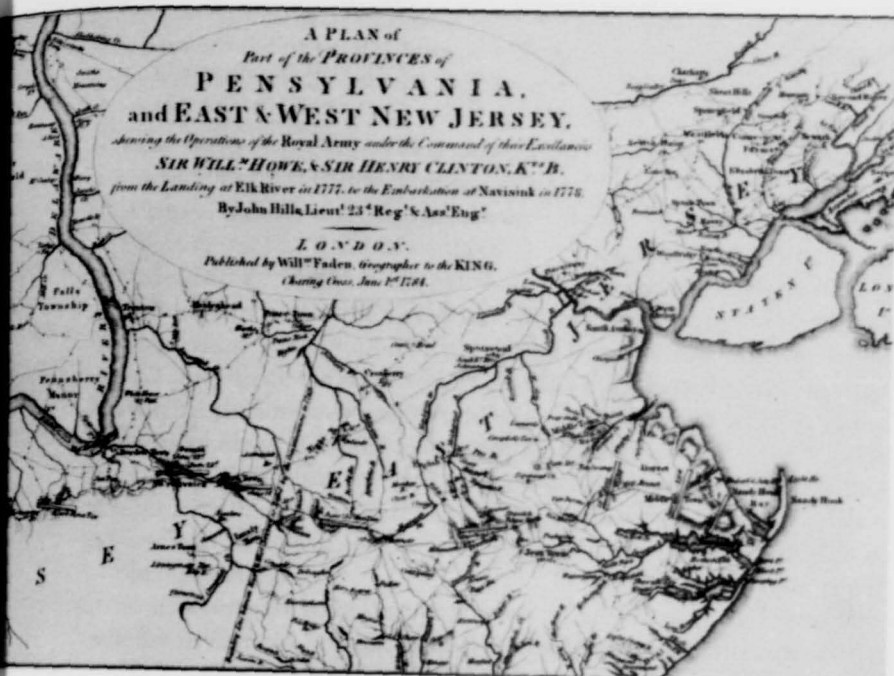


Courtesy of the William Clements Library, University of Michigan.

overseers and vigorously defending his conduct for several months, an obvious indication of his steadfast convictions.¹⁰

Biddle's role in the Revolution soon broadened as Pennsylvania was inexorably drawn into the conflict. On 24 July 1776, the State Assembly appointed Owen to the Committee of Safety, a body to expedite Pennsylvania's military operations, where he served until 13 March 1777, when he was reappointed to the subordinate Board of War. Colonel Biddle's apparent ability and vigor soon drew the attention of the Continental Congress which named him to the important post of assistant commissary general of forage under his brother Clement. Owen held this exceedingly difficult position until 15 August 1780 when he was replaced, ostensibly as the result of departmental reorganization. Biddle also had a hand in creating the state constitution. Nine days before joining the Committee of Safety, he had served in the

10. Owen's brother, Clement, was disowned three months later by the same Monthly Meeting. *Monthly Meeting Minutes: Philadelphia (1771-1777)*, Friends Historical Library, pp. 335, 351; Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842, Biddle Mss.



Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention, which produced that state's radical frame of government.¹¹

Owen encountered formidable problems in public life. Undoubtedly, his greatest difficulties as a public official occurred during his service as assistant commissary general of forage. He and his brother Clement, laboring for three bleak years to obtain provisions for army horses and other draft animals, faced four chronic and intractable problems: a lack of funds, rampant inflation, a shortage of trained and trustworthy subordinates, and the apathy or hostility of many farmers. Biddle frequently discussed these difficulties at great length in the considerable correspondence with his brother and subordinates.¹²

Despite these numerous problems, Owen continued to serve at his post until August 1780, when Colonel Samuel Miles relieved

11. *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*. (Harrisburg: State Printing Office, 1896), 10:482-483; *Pennsylvania Archives, Votes of the Assembly* (Harrisburg: State Printing Office, 1896), 8th Series, 8: 7569; Henry D. Biddle, "Owen Biddle," pp. 300-306.

12. Owen Biddle to Colonel Robert Hooper, Jr., 22 October 1778; Owen Biddle to Major Craig, 14 November 1778; Owen Biddle to Colonel Robert Hooper, Jr., 27 January 1779; Clement Biddle to Owen Biddle, 15 November 1779; Clement Biddle to Owen Biddle, 27 July 1780, Letter Book, 1775-1780.

him.¹³ The sense of duty that Owen and Clement felt toward the tattered army and struggling nation during those disheartening years was briefly expressed in a letter from Clement, written at Morristown, New Jersey, on 5 May 1777. "My presence here is necessary," he declared. "I will never quit with Dishonour and am ready to render any Service which my Country may require of me. . . ." ¹⁴

Unfortunately, the tribulations of Owen Biddle's private life persisted concurrently with those of his public career. The British razed his fine country residence, Peel Hall, during their occupation of Philadelphia in 1777-1778. When his creditors finally seized most of his worldly possessions to pay some of his numerous debts, Owen felt compelled to ask his eldest son John to give up his legal study in order to work behind the counter of a small drug-store to help support his many siblings. Biddle, in fact, was unable to fulfill all of his financial obligations until shortly before his death on 10 March 1799.¹⁵

It was during these severe personal trials that Owen decided to rejoin his orthodox Meeting. He submitted his acknowledgment—a written statement of error—on 29 May 1783, just twenty-five months after joining the splinter Free Quaker Meeting,¹⁶ and

13. Congress passed a law on 15 August 1780, reorganizing the Quartermaster Department which resulted in the resignation of General Greene, Owen and Clement Biddle's superior who happened to be a nonpacifist Quaker from Massachusetts, and the replacement of Owen and Clement. This entire operation may have been the result of political squabbling and intrigue since Owen made frequent references to the seeming unwillingness of Congress to send adequate funds to pay for sorely needed provisions. Owen Biddle, *Diary*, 14 October 1779, 18 July 1780, 27 July 1780, 11 August 1780, 31 August 1780, Biddle MSS, Friends Historical Library.

14. Clement Biddle to Owen Biddle, 5 May 1777, Letter Book, 1775-1780.

15. Henry D. Biddle, "Owen Biddle," pp. 306-307; Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842; James Pemberton to John Pemberton, 15 February 1783, Pemberton Papers, 38: 29, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

16. In February 1781, three disowned Friends, Samuel Wetherill, Jr., Timothy Matlack, and Christopher Marshall, Jr., founded a new denomination known as the Free Quakers. Aside from the conduct of meetings for worship and business, this new Meeting differed from the orthodox Society in practically every respect, especially in urging its members to participate in the nation's civil affairs and military defense. Yet, despite these dramatic alterations, or perhaps because of them, the Meeting managed to attract 64 of the 420 nonpacifists to its membership. The denomination proved to be short-lived, however. Membership dropped precipitously soon after its founding, and services at the original Philadelphia Meeting ceased after 1830. Free Quaker Records, American Philosophical Society Records; Wetherill, *History of the Free Quakers*, pp. 26-30; Mekeel, "Quakers in the American Revolution," pp. 272-273.

sixty-seven months after being disowned from his orthodox Meeting. Biddle had never completely severed his contacts with the Society of Friends and was welcomed back without animosity or suspicion. In fact, his interest in youth permitted him to lead the significant Committee on Education which founded the first Quaker boarding school, Westtown. Unfortunately, Owen did not live to see the fruition of this joint project, since the secondary school opened in July 1799, four months after his death.¹⁷

Despite the awesome responsibilities and staggering misfortunes of his public and private life, Owen Biddle continued to pursue his other educational interests, notably those related to his intense scientific curiosity. His daughter Ann related many years after his death that although her father was "a man of good natural abilities, improved by the acquaintance with the standard authors of that time. . . . his chief attention was directed in early life to mechanics and scientific subjects . . . which led him . . . to astronomical studies."¹⁸

As a longtime secretary and curator of the American Philosophical Society, Biddle associated with the noted astronomer and mathematician, David Rittenhouse, and other devotees of scientific learning. Owen was one of the thirteen appointed by the society to view the transit of Venus on 3 June 1769, his station being Cape Henlopen, Delaware. Scarcely were the British out of Philadelphia in the spring of 1778 before he and Rittenhouse were peering through a telescope at an eclipse of the sun. In fact, his lifelong interest in science was equaled in later years only by his interest in the education of young Quakers.¹⁹

17. Monthly Meeting Minutes: Philadelphia (1782-1789), p. 85; (1789-1795), pp. 111, 118; James Pemberton to John Pemberton, letters, 1782-1799, 37: 93, 104, 106, 108, 126, 134; 38: 29, HSP. Social contact between Owen Biddle and orthodox Quakers was noted in the *Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*. Elizabeth Drinker was a sprightly and informative Quaker lady of Philadelphia, who carefully recorded daily events in the city from 1759 until her death in 1807. Such an example of social contact between this orthodox Quakeress and the militant, ex-Quaker Owen Biddle was recorded by her on 12 April 1778: "In ye afternoon Parson Burton and wife, Owen Biddle and wife, and some others, came to see us," Henry D. Biddle, ed., *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1889), p. 96; Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842, Biddle Mss.

18. Ann Biddle to John Biddle, September 1842, Biddle Mss.

19. Ibid.; Owen Biddle, receipt from Thomas Hoombe (Treasurer) for annual dues to the American Philosophical Society, 7 February 1772, Biddle Mss; Henry D. Biddle, *Extracts from the Journal of Elizabeth Drinker*, p. 96; Jacobs, *Tarnished Warrior*, p. 59.

Owen Biddle was undoubtedly an exceptional man. His long service to his country, his interest in education and science, and his ability to deal with a multitude of herculean problems made him an unusually able leader.

Another able nonpacifist Friend was John Lacey, Jr. Lacey, unlike his urban associate, Biddle, grew up in the more remote and rustic environment of Bucks County. He was a descendant of William Lacey, an early immigrant from the Isle of Wight, who settled near Wrightstown sometime in the 1680s. Lacey was born on 4 December 1752, the eldest son of John Lacey and Jane Chapman, who like most of John's immediate relations, were natives of Bucks County.²⁰

Lacey's ancestors were all farmers and members of the Society of Friends, and he was naturally raised in their faith. Probably like the majority of his rural contemporaries, he enjoyed few of the advantages of a formal education.²¹ After eight years of learning haphazard spelling and reading portions of the Old Testament, his father put fourteen-year-old John to work at his saw and grist mills and cooper shops. To John's credit, he made some effort to overcome the defects of his meager education by reading and private study during his leisure hours.²²

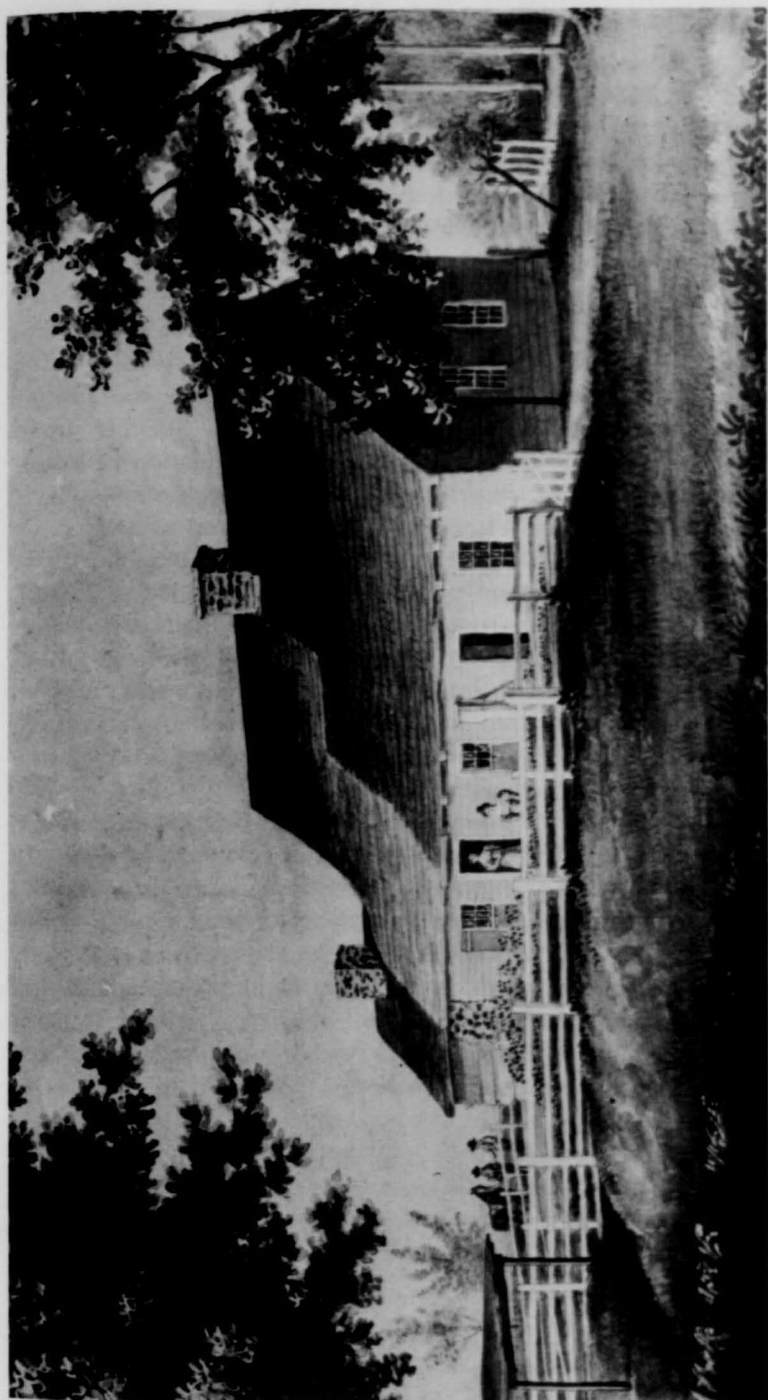
In the summer of 1773, Lacey, now twenty-one, was first able to glimpse the world beyond his narrow, bucolic hamlet. At that time, his Uncle Zebulon Heston, a Quaker minister, obtained permission from the Wrightstown Monthly Meeting to visit the Delaware Indians in Ohio. Taking his young nephew with him, he journeyed most of the distance on horseback. Leaving Philadelphia on 9 July, they reached Pittsburgh nine days later. After resting a few days, they crossed the Allegheny River in a canoe, swimming their horses, and entered the vast wilderness of the "Northwest".²³

20. Monthly Meeting Birth and Death Records: Wrightstown (1716-1815) (microfilm) Friends Historical Library, p. 38; William H. Davis, ed., "Memoirs of Brigadier-General John Lacey of Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 25 (1901): 1-2; William H. Davis, "General John Lacey, Our Quaker General," *Bucks County Historical Society*, 3 (January 1901): 32.

21. "The greatest defect in the Society of Quakers had hitherto been the almost total omission (sic) to eddurate (sic) their Children. Very few indeed at least in the Country gave their sons what might be called more than a limited (sic) common education. . . It was my Misfortune to be of this Class." Davis, "Memoirs," p. 3.

22. Ibid.; Davis, "General John Lacey," pp. 32-33.

23. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 6.



JOHN LACEY'S BIRTHPLACE AT WRIGHTSTOWN, UNSIGNED WATERCOLOR DATED 1835.
Courtesy Bucks County Historical Society.

After a successful ministry to the Delawares, they returned by way of Virginia, reaching Wrightstown on 14 September 1773 after having traversed 1,000 miles of rugged country in just under ten weeks' time. Despite this grueling pace, young Lacey managed to keep a journal in which he noted things that captured his interest. Perhaps in recognition of John's recent achievement, his father placed him in charge of the family mills when he returned to Wrightstown.²⁴

Lacey was still toiling in his father's trade when Massachusetts militiamen first clashed with British regulars in the spring of 1775. He had been observing these events closely and rapidly concluded that Britain was the aggressor. John, like his urban cobelligerent, Owen Biddle, soon declared his intention of enlisting in the Continental Army in order to defend his homeland. He was one of the first in his neighborhood to take up arms, and, in July 1775, became standard bearer of the Second Battalion, Bucks County Militia. The young men of the neighborhood, evidently regarding Lacey as their leader, soon organized their own volunteer company and elected him their captain.²⁵ These martial actions obviously violated the pacifist creed of John's religion and, despite repeated entreaties by Quaker overseers to cease such activities, he remained adamant. His formal disownment on 6 February 1776 was the inevitable consequence.²⁶

One month prior to Lacey's disownment from Wrightstown Monthly Meeting, the Supreme Executive Council, apparently recognizing his potential as an officer, had commissioned the fledgling warrior as a captain in the newly created Fourth Pennsylvania Regiment. Commanded by Colonel Anthony Wayne, John's regiment participated in the campaign to invade Canada during the summer and fall of 1776, serving as part of General Sullivan's force sent to assist General Arnold and his small, ragged army encamped before the fortress of Quebec.²⁷ After this ill-

24. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

25. "I without hesitation inrolled [sic] myself under the banner of my County, being young and full of fire. Patriotism beat high in my breast." *Ibid.*, p. 11.

26. "I . . . Stood the Ordeal of the Quaker Society of which I was then a member. My Patriotism was pure and irresistible . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 11; Monthly Meeting Minutes: Wrightstown (1734-1788), p. 336; Davis, "General John Lacey, Our Quaker General," pp. 33-34; Lacey, like Owen Biddle, was not the only member of his family to actively support the Revolution. His armsbearing cousin, Isaac Heston, was disowned two months before, while John's younger brother, Ben, was expelled twenty months later. Monthly Meeting Minutes: Wrightstown (1734-1788), pp. 331, 362.

27. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 351; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 34-35.

fated expedition culminated in utter disaster, Lacey returned to Wrightstown in November 1776, where he resigned his commission. John later revealed in his memoirs that considerable friction had developed between himself and Colonel Wayne, so that his resignation was actually the result of personal animosity between two proud, overly sensitive officers rather than the unfortunate outcome of the recent military campaign.²⁸

Captain Lacey soon surmounted his covert resentments and reentered public life. On 22 March 1777, he was commissioned a sub-lieutenant of Bucks County, a county official in charge of recruiting soldiers for the state militia.²⁹ Lacey performed his duties so efficiently that he was appointed a lieutenant-colonel of the militia in his district on 6 May. In October 1777, he saw action in the Battle of Germantown as a volunteer, not having his own command. That same month, Colonel Lacey assumed command of a regiment and joined General Potter's brigade at Whitemarsh, where they engaged the enemy for several days. At Gulph Mills, a few miles west of Philadelphia, British troops routed Lacey's forces and he narrowly escaped capture or death.³⁰

This militant ex-Quaker fought again at Christmastide when he joined in the attack on the British outposts at the northern periphery of Philadelphia. On 9 January 1778, the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania awarded Lacey the commission of a brigadier general. At twenty-five years of age, he became the youngest general officer in the Continental Army, an appointment all the more flattering since it was unsolicited.³¹

John's promotion marked the beginning of the severest ordeal of his entire military career. He was quickly placed in charge of General Armstrong's depleted army, reduced from 3000 to 600 by desertion and sickness. His command, a forward defense position to protect Washington's winter encampment, occupied the precarious ground between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers. While the British forces wintered comfortably in nearby Philadelphia, the exhausted remnants of the Continental Army gradually starved and froze at Valley Forge. To make matters worse, the complacent enemy periodically harassed the American defensive

28. Ibid.

29. Davis, "Memoirs," 26: 108-109; Davis, "General John Lacey," pp. 36-37.

30. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 109; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 37.

31. Ibid.

positions and induced many of the opportunistic local farmers to sell their produce in the city at a handsome price.³²

General Lacey was fully occupied with the seemingly impossible task of controlling this area west and north of Philadelphia during the winter, spring, and early summer of 1778. Lacey became so disheartened by the incessant British raids and Tory dealings with the enemy that he wrote this exceedingly pessimistic message to General Washington on 29 March 1778:

Every kind of villany is carried on by the people near the enemy's lines, and, from their general conduct, I am induced to believe but few real friends to America are left within ten miles of Philadelphia.³³

By April, this traffic with the enemy had reached such alarming proportions and had become so injurious to the revolutionary cause that a plan to depopulate the country between the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers within fifteen miles of Philadelphia was given serious consideration.³⁴

In May 1778, British forces under Lt. Colonel Abercrombie and Major Simcoe surprised Lacey with a sudden attack and, once again, he narrowly avoided defeat and capture. On this occasion, however, John managed to repulse the enemy forces, much to the relief of his military superiors. Civilian leaders also demonstrated their appreciation on 16 May when the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania congratulated him for his "highly approved . . . conduct" and praised his men "for their bravery."³⁵

Although this proved to be General Lacey's last field command, he continued to discharge his important duties as sub-lieutenant of Bucks County, and dispatched his brigade to harass the retreating British after their evacuation of Philadelphia, in June 1778.³⁶ During this period, Lacey assumed his first political office, that of county commissioner of confiscated property. That autumn, he was elected to the State Assembly, taking his seat in November,

32. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 297; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 37.

33. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 297; Davis, "General John Lacey," pp. 38-39.

34. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 297; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 40; General Washington to General Lacey, 31 March 1778, *Memories and Correspondence of John Lacey*, Dreer Collection, 34: 302, HSP.

35. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 298; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 41; *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, 11: 490.

36. Davis, *Memoirs*, p. 298; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 41.

and in 1779 became a member of the Supreme Executive Council, holding that office for the next two years.³⁷ In September 1781, John assembled the state militia at Newtown to repel a threatened attack on Pennsylvania by the British army in New York. Fortunately, the raid never materialized, and all significant military activity ceased with the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia the following month.³⁸

Earlier that year, John Lacey, still in his twenties, decided to devote more time to personal matters. On 18 January, he married Anastatia Reynolds, the daughter of a military acquaintance, Colonel Thomas Reynolds, of New Mills (now Pemberton), in Burlington County, New Jersey. In 1782, Lacey moved to this small community where he spent the remainder of his life as a prosperous iron merchant. He soon became a prominent member of his adopted residence, and filled several important public offices, including assemblyman, justice of the peace, and county justice.³⁹

John Lacey's service as a military officer and elected public official distinguished him from the vast majority of nonpacifist Quakers, as Owen Biddle's service had done for him. Yet both men, in turn, revealed many contrasts in their respective backgrounds and careers. Owen Biddle was born into a prominent, old Quaker merchant family in the urban environment of Philadelphia, while John Lacey descended from plain, obscure Quaker farmers in the rural setting of Bucks County. Owen achieved some degree of prominence prior to his disownment, while John achieved prominence after he left his parent meeting. Biddle's economic situation, unlike his social status, deteriorated markedly after his expulsion from the Society of Friends, while Lacey eventually acquired wealth that was commensurate with his rising social status. Owen's broad scholarly interests indicated a well-educated man, while John's lack of formal schooling and highly ungrammatical memoirs denoted an individual of more rudimentary learning and narrower educational pursuits. Biddle was disowned from Quaker meeting in his early middle years (thirty-eight), while Lacey was expelled from the Society as a

37. *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania*, Vols. 11, 12, 13; *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia). 21: 122, 136; Davis, "Memoirs," p. 298; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 41.

38. Vice-President Moore to General Lacey, 28 September 1781, Dreer Collection 34: 478-480; Davis, "Memoirs," p. 298; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 41.

39. Davis, "Memoirs," p. 298; Davis, "General John Lacey," p. 41.

young man of twenty-three. Owen joined the Free Quakers, then returned to his orthodox faith, while John neither joined the Free Quaker Meeting nor returned to the Society of Friends.

Despite their diverse backgrounds and careers, however, Owen Biddle and John Lacey exhibited a number of similar traits. They both declared their patriotic convictions openly, prior to being disowned, resisted the prolonged pressure of their religious overseers to renounce them, and maintained these convictions long after their respective expulsions. Both militants had relatives (brothers and cousins) who were also disowned for bearing arms. They both advanced rapidly within Revolutionary society, and both men held the same civilian occupation, that of merchant. But perhaps the most striking similarities of these two exceptional leaders were their apparent willingness to serve their new nation, their ample capacities for enduring intense and prolonged hardships, and their considerable contributions to their adopted cause.