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## REVOLUTIONARY WAR LETTERS OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM VAN HORNE

WILLIAM E. VAN HORNE

AT the time of the Revolutionary War, the Reverend William Van Horne was a young Baptist minister, pastor of the church at Southampton, Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Son of a Baptist minister, he had been born in Bucks County in 1747, educated in the classical Greek and Latin at the Rev. Samuel Jones' academy at Lower Dublin, and received an honorary M.A. degree from the College of Rhode Island, now Brown University. An ardent patriot, he joined the Bucks County militia as chaplain four days after the Declaration of Independence was adopted.<sup>1</sup> In command was his good friend and parishioner, Colonel Joseph Hart.<sup>2</sup>

In response to a call from the Continental Congress, delegates from the City of Philadelphia and the six counties of Pennsylvania met on July 16, 1776, to write a Constitution and form a state government. Representing Bucks County were eight men, including the Rev. Mr. Van Horne and Colonel Hart.<sup>3</sup> The final draft of the preamble to the Constitution was prepared by a three-man committee: Benjamin

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Mr. William E. Van Horne is an electrical engineer from the University of Pennsylvania. Historical research is his avocation. He is a sixth generation descendant of the Reverend William Van Horne.—Editor

1 The Rev. William Van Horne's appointment as Chaplain, 1st Battalion Company, Bucks County Militia, dated July 8, 1776, is in the Rutherford B. Hayes Memorial Library, Fremont, Ohio.

2 William W. H. Davis (Ed.), "Minutes of the Committee of Safety of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, 1774-76," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XV (1891), 257-290, 282.

3 *Pennsylvania Archives*, Second Series, Harrisburg, 1875, III, 680.

Franklin, who was also the president of the convention; David Rittenhouse; and the Rev. William Van Horne.<sup>4</sup> The convention finished its work and the first government of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was established September 28, 1776.<sup>5</sup>

During the rest of 1776 and 1777, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne stayed at home and tended his flock. Colonel Hart was elected to the legislature which first sat in Philadelphia, then moved to Lancaster when the British occupied the city.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime General Washington's Continental Army was reeling from disaster to disaster, and barely remaining in existence. Only Washington's surprise victory over the isolated detachment of Hessians at Trenton on Christmas 1776, and Gates' victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga in the fall of 1777 kept a spark of hope alive among the patriots.

On December 19, 1777, the pitiful remains of Washington's army stumbled into winter quarters at Valley Forge, a few miles west of Southampton. Two weeks later, on January 1, 1778, the Rev. William Van Horne obtained a leave of absence from his church and joined the army to minister to the spiritual needs of the men in camp. By the terms of the leave, his wife and children were allowed to continue to occupy the parsonage. During his absence the church was to depend on supplies, or substitute ministers.<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that initially the Rev. Mr. Van Horne felt that he was ministering to the army, but was not himself a part of it. Only later, as will be seen, did he decide to become officially a chaplain in the Continental forces.

After two months in camp, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne wrote the first of a series of letters to his friend, Colonel Hart, in Lancaster. These letters have recently come to light in the collection of the Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

In the first letter, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne described some of the "distresses" facing the army. In this, as with those following, the original spelling and capitalization have been followed, but punctuation marks have in some cases been added for clarity. The writer frequently

4 Maurice Jefferis Babb, "David Rittenhouse," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LVI (1932), 193-224, 216.

5 Lewis H. Meader, "The Council of Censors," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XXII (1898), 265-300, 278.

6 Unpublished memoir by W. W. H. Davis accompanying this collection of letters by the Rev. William Van Horne to Col. Joseph Hart, Bucks County Historical Society, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

7 William W. H. Davis, *History of the Southampton Baptist Church*, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, 1884, 8-9.



*William Van Horne*

The above silhouette of the Reverend William Van Horne, the only known likeness, is in possession of Miss Ellen Little, Norwalk, Ohio, a descendant.

used the abbreviations "w<sup>c</sup>," "w<sup>t</sup>," and "w<sup>n</sup>" for "which," "what," and "when"; as well as "y<sup>t</sup>," "y<sup>m</sup>," and "y<sup>ir</sup>" for "that," "them," and "their." The "infamous Hovendon" (Captain Richard Hovendon of the Pennsylvania Dragoons) was a leader of an American Tory company of cavalry in the British service<sup>8</sup> whom the Rev. Mr. Van Horne obviously considered traitors of the worst sort.

Camp Valley forge, March 4th, 1778

Dear Sir

Being in a way to forward a few lines to you I cannot deny myself the pleasure. Our distresses begin to be more and more sensibly felt. Since ye late excursions of ye enemy every thing almost is thrown into disorder among us. their foraging Parties have been about 12 or 13 miles from Philadelphia on ye York, Church, Busselton, & Bristol Roads. taking ye best Horses, Waggon & some Negroes, & every sort of forage. their light horse under ye command of ye infamous Hovendon consisting chiefly of wretches from among ourselves, among whom are ye names of Biles, Willit, Harveys, Chapman &c. have made several daring excursions into ye Country and without any resistance Captivated many of ye Inhabitants. and taken, ye Cloth at Newtown, at one town a Number of cattle at another amounting to about 130. which last were taken about four miles above Mr. Edw. Bartholomews on ye morning of ye 24th of february.

Our Meetings of Worship are for ye present broken up. Active friends to ye Country are obliged to live from home or dodge about for safety. Your sons were all well and safe on Saturday last. This may be said of ye british troops in their foraging excursions y<sup>t</sup> they do not generally Misuse ye Inhabitants as heretofore. The Danger of greater Distresses threatens us more and more in every point of View y<sup>t</sup> I can confess it, unless ye enemy decamp & leave this state, which dont seem to me very probable.

Tomorrow I expect to return homewards. I am not able to give you much news. One warrant is to be hanged for piloting ye Enemy. that General Wa[y]ne has had a skirmish on ye Jersey side but what ye Event am not able

8 G. D. Scull (Ed.), "Journal of Captain John Montresor, July 1, 1777, to July 1, 1778 — Chief Engineer of the British Army," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, VI (1882), 189-206, 203.

to say. With affectionate respects I am your humble Serv't.

William Van Horne

Shortly after writing this letter, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne returned home for a few weeks. He did not stay long, however, for reasons explained in the next letter. Because of the danger of enemy excursions, the church decided to have a "vacancy," i.e., cease having meetings for the time being.

The only defense force between the British and the farms and villages of Bucks County was a detachment of Pennsylvania militia under General Lacey stationed at Crooked Billet Tavern, now Hatboro. The Rev. Mr. Van Horne expressed optimism that they would not be bothered, but he was wrong. Less than a month after the following letter was written, General Lacey's detachment was surrounded by a superior force of British regulars and almost wiped out. Half of the militia was killed, many of the rest severely wounded, and only a handful escaped through the woods.<sup>9</sup>

In the letter, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne thanks Colonel Hart for having sent two publications: the fifth number of the *Crisis*, a patriotic publication, and a speech or statement by the Earl of Abingdon. Abingdon was a member of the House of Lords and a vigorous defender of America in Parliament. He signed a manifesto vigorously denouncing the "cruel" "war of oppression" as early as October 16, 1775, and continued his opposition throughout the war.<sup>10</sup>

Southampton April 2d, 1778

Worthy Sir

I thank you for your kindness and Attention in writing to me. Your third letter I received yesterday & am sorry you have been so neglected by your friends in this place, but think it must be chiefly owing to ye difficulty of forwarding Letters your way. Soon after receiving your last letter but one I wrote from Camp [Valley Forge] & am sorry to hear it has miscarried. Am glad you enjoy so good a measure of Health & pray GOD it may be continued. It is indeed one of ye greatest temporal blessings, especially at a Time of so much Difficulty.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 203. The "infamous Hovendon's" dragoons were part of the force that massacred the militia. See also Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, New York, 1952, 553-555.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris (Eds.), *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six* (2 vols.), Indianapolis, 1958, II, 258.

I must acknowledge ye friendly Caution in Your last while Gen'l Lacey's Numbers are so inconsiderable, I have been continually on my guard, & so much from home as to be almost a stranger to it. the Danger at present dont seem so great as in time past. for before ye Militia under Gen'l Lacey's Command there are continually scouting and detached Parties of our regular Troops on most of ye roads between us and Town, y<sup>t</sup> ye excursions of ye light Horse will be prevented in a great measure; & as to large Parties advancing this way seems to me now improbable there being no object here worthy of their Attention but Forage, & they have obtained so large a supply some where down ye Delaware y<sup>t</sup> their Necessity will not be great very soon. 40 sail went up by Marcus Hook last fryday deeply laden with ye article.

Your favors, Crisis No. 5 & ye judicious Observations of ye Earl of Abington are thankfully received, and read with pleasure, especially ye latter being a performance I had much wanted to see.

The News of Mr. Davids Death was very unexpected. His accomplishments & abilities as a preacher were very considerable & raised ye hopes of his usefulness very high among many of ye Friends of Zion; but how often are ye fondest Hopes and most raised Expectations, brought to the Dust. And raised seemingly; but — for disappointment.

You observe Sir, this is a trying time. perhaps this will apply to every department Civil & military, & to families and individuals. for my part I can speak experimentally; And wish I could feel & see more of a sanctified use of those awful Dispensations. Whether this Campaign will land us in Slavery or Freedom GOD only can determine. I wish we were prepared for so great a Blessing as ye Latter.

Last Lordsday week, understanding ye Enemy were nearly out of forage, ye roads mending fast we expected them to make a push this way for a supply. We concluded after meeting to have a vacancy till we should see how matters would be. From a due consideration of my Situation & Circumstances I have had some thots of applying for a Chaplaincy in ye Army, & have went so far as to get a Person in ye Army to enquire for a suitable Vacancy. Mrs. Van Horne joins in Love to you; are all favor'd w<sup>th</sup> Health. re-

main Dear Sir your Affectionate Brother &c.

Wm Van Horne

The Rev. Mr. Van Horne's application was favorably received and he was appointed chaplain of General Glover's Massachusetts Brigade in May 1778. Glover's brigade, originally a regiment, was one of the most famous in the army. In the early hectic days of 1775, when Washington was attempting to form an army out of an armed mob of independent farmers and backwoodsmen, John Glover's regiment of sailors and fishermen from Marblehead, Massachusetts, was on the scene. The seafaring men, accustomed to the necessity of unquestioning obedience to a captain, formed the first disciplined body of troops at Washington's disposal and he used them as a headquarters and provost guard.<sup>11</sup> In 1776 they manned the boats in several amphibious operations, including the famous crossing of the Delaware to attack the Hessians at Trenton.<sup>12</sup> In 1777, expanded to a brigade, Glover's Marbleheaders played a prominent role with Gates' army in the defeat of Burgoyne.<sup>13</sup>

In May of 1778 Washington became aware that the British in Philadelphia were planning a move. He rightly concluded that they planned to evacuate the city and march across New Jersey to join the force in New York. Swelled by short-term volunteers, the Continental Army slightly outnumbered the British, and Washington planned to attack them while they were on the march.<sup>14</sup>

Major General Charles Lee (no relation to the great Light-Horse Harry Lee), after having spent over a year as a captive of the British, had recently been exchanged for the British General Prescott and returned to duty. Washington put him in command of the leading wing of the army and ordered him to attack the British at Monmouth. Instead, he retreated in the face of an inferior rear guard! Washington, with a classic display of temper, removed Lee and personally led the army to a victory. He lost the opportunity, however, to capture or destroy any large segment of the enemy force.<sup>15</sup>

The American army, cocky with its victory, resumed its march through New Brunswick, Scotch Plains, Paramus, and Kakiat (now New Hempstead, New York) toward the North, or Hudson, River.<sup>16</sup>

11 Bruce Lancaster, *From Lexington to Liberty*, Garden City, N. Y., 1955, 141.

12 *Ibid.*, 242.

13 *Ibid.*, 313.

14 Ward, 572.

15 *Ibid.*, 580.

16 *Ibid.*, 587.

On July 4, at New Brunswick, they held one of the first "Fourth of July Fireworks" exhibitions in history.<sup>17</sup> In a letter from Kakiat, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne described the "Few De Joy" (Fr., *Feu de joie*, literally "fire of joy").

N Y Government Kakiejate July 13, 1778

Worthy Sir

After due respects, and acknowledging your favors from Lancaster, w<sup>c</sup> I had not opportunity to answer as I wished to do, shall forward a few lines by Mr. Dungan & shall continue to do so as often as convenient. I enjoy thru divine Goodness a comfortable state of Health, but find it difficult to enjoy myself as I would wish on a march.

The Brigade to w<sup>c</sup> I joined is Gen'l Glovers of Massachusetts, where more attention is paid to ye formalities of Religion than among our own. But as to ye Essence, of it too little is to be found in either. We are, tho on a march in ye practice of attending Evening prayer daily, w<sup>c</sup> is more than has been introduced among ye southern troops & is so much ye more agreeable.

I congratulate you on ye Bravery of our troops on ye 28th last at monmouth, w<sup>c</sup> as it was, is very important, but would have been much more so had ye intentions of our Commander in Chief been carried into Execution as in all human probability it might had not Gen'l Lee failed on w<sup>t</sup> was expected of him. *But we yet deserve ye Scourge.*

You have undoubtedly been informed y<sup>t</sup> Gen'l Lee was on trial for his conduct. ye Gen'l Court Martial met on ye 4th of this Instant & proceeded to examination of Witnesses on ye first Charge. Disobedience of Orders in not attacking ye Enemy. on the 5th they met again; were soon after ordered to Morris Town, from thence to Camp at Paramus where we expect they are now on that business. ye result of the Court will be communicated when known.

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17 This was almost, but not quite, the first in history. On the first anniversary, July 4, 1777, it is clear that Washington's army did not celebrate the day in any way. See William S. Baker, "Itinerary of General Washington from June 15, 1775, to December 23, 1783," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XIV (1890), 257. But in the small garrison at Fort Ticonderoga, New York, a junior-size "feu-de-joie" was shot off July 4, 1777, as described by young Henry Livingston, quoted in Louise Hall Tharp, *The Baroness and the General*, Boston, 1962, 127.



On ye 4th Instant our Troops announced our Independence by a Few De Joy. On ye South, elevated & beautiful Bank of Raritan [River], the troops with green boughs in their hats were paraded in two Lines. His Excellency's Guards on ye right, next 13 pieces of artillery, then 10 or twelve Brigades with a piece of Artillery on ye right & in ye Center of each, composed the front Line extending a very Considerable Distance. The rear line consisting of about half as many Brigades, disposed in ye Same Order about 150 yards distant, formed ye disposition of ye whole Army. His Excellency having viewed ye Whole and given ye proper Orders returned to his Quarters on ye other side of ye river opposite ye right wing of ye front line, which were on an Eminence commanding a prospect of ye Whole, & having ascended to a Balcony on ye top of ye House & ye Signal being given, 13 Cannon were fired. then followed a running discharge of Cannon & Musquetry from the right to left, & continued from the left of ye rear to ye Right of ye same & then a General Huzza. The whole was performed three times & the troops brought of without an accident. The Consideration of ye late defeat of the Enemy & divine providence having removed ye Gloom that seemed to shade our Independance invited ye Festivity. The beautiful Position of the troops, ye Serenity of the air & ye approaching Evening, & ye columns of smoke arising from ye Musquetry and Cannon so judiciously disposed all contributed to exhibit one of the grandest Scenes I ever beheld.

On ye next morning ye left Wing of ye army marched under ye Command of Major Gen'l Baron De Kalb, & have continued marching about 8 or ten miles per day on an average ever since, except one Day in w<sup>c</sup> we rested. The March has proved salutary to ye troop. ye pleasing cheerfulness of ye Inhabitants, to provide for ye army, ye plenty we have enjoyed being in front of ye army, ye gradual & Easy Day marches, & favorable weather have contributed much to our Advantage. Health & good spirits are very generally enjoyed.

The right wing w<sup>c</sup> formed ye Second Column advanced ye next Day & took ye Ground in ye same Day we left it at Quibble town & have continued so to do generally during ye march. The Rear line w<sup>c</sup> constitutes ye third Column is

also Advancing as near to ye Second as Convenient. the first Column left this place this morning & crosses North river at Kings Ferry this Day. Nothing further remarkable on ye march has occurred to me.

As to News we have but little. The Brittish are chiefly on Statin Island by report. A ship of War is up ye North river as far as Tarry town where ye River forms a basin almost; being so much wider than in other Parts. With her is a tender, Gally, &c. We hear also by two gentlemen from York that ye Tory inhabitants of Philadelphia fled to New York arrived in great Confusion for want of places to dispose of their families and Effects.

I hope you begin to enjoy yourself comfortably in Philadelphia & that you will excuse my not calling upon you when there as I knew not where to find your lodging and the Difficulty of obtaining a few Articles I much wanted engrossed my whole time.

I fear you will be interrupted in ye peaceable Administration of Government by ye restless and unreasonable anti-constitutional Gentlemen, who have already done more mischief to ye State than it will ever be in their power to doe good. When there now is ye best opportunity of establishing ye Civil Authority, in my Opinion, it has been since the Revolution. I am

With Affection yours  
Wm Van Horne

While the British held New York, the main road from New England to the middle and southern states crossed the North, or Hudson, River at Kings' Ferry. This ferry ran from Stony Point to Verplanck's Point, two rocky eminences which overlook the river just south of Peekskill.<sup>18</sup> The American army crossed there and took up positions surrounding New York City.

A French fleet under Comte D'Estaing, carrying a small army on board, arrived to cooperate with Washington. The allies decided to attempt to retake Newport, Rhode Island, which had been occupied by the British since 1776. Washington detached "two of the best brigades in the army,"<sup>19</sup> Varnum's and Glover's, and sent them

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<sup>18</sup> Ward, 596.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 588.

to join the militia forces at Providence under General John Sullivan who was awaiting the arrival of the French. To smooth relations between the French and the rough-talking, terrible-tempered Sullivan, Washington dispatched Generals LaFayette and Greene with the reinforcements.<sup>20</sup>

[Address obliterated]

July 27th, 1778

Dear Sir,

Since my last wrote from Kahoate ye main Army advanced to ye head of Kings direct over ye North River & about 35 Miles from New York, on ye 20th of this Instant. On ye 22d Glover's Brigade were Ordered to March towards ye Etward [eastward]. Same day three Regaments were ordered from White Plains and fell in with us at Stamford under ye Command of Gen'l Varnum. Same day the Army under Gen'l Gates moved from White Plains near or towards Kings Bridge. The next Day we understand his Excellency with ye Main Army Advanced to White Plains.

Our detachment arrived at this Place Yesterday Morning about Eight. ye middle of ye Day spent in ye agreeable [bus]iness of delivering new Clothing to the troops. at 4 OClock ye troops marched in order to encamp about 6 miles ahead. It begins to be beyond a Doubt y<sup>t</sup> our Destination is for Rhode Island to act in concert with Gen'l Sullivans Command & a Fleet which we understand is ordered for that place. If God smile upon us I hope we shall do well. I congratulate you [on the arrival] of ye French Fleet & ye Reinforcements expected in ye Naval department. How has Divine providence favored ye Vertuous Efforts of ye brave Sons of Freedom! How is Whig Faith turned into Vision!

By a letter from his Excellency to ye Commander of this detachment a forced march is recommended & ye heavy baggage to be left behind. Day before yesterday ye Marquis La Fayette came up with us, takes command on ye march. Our Rout has been thru a fine country especially since we have been in Connecticut. ye troop in fine Health and Spirits. I am Dear Sir Yours Affectionately

W<sup>m</sup> Van Horne

<sup>20</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington in the American Revolution, (1775-1783)*, Boston, 1967, 324.

After the Providence River passes the city of Providence, it widens out to form Narragansett Bay. At the mouth of the bay are two islands, Conanicut Island to the west and Rhode Island to the east. These form three channels out to the sea, Narragansett Passage to the west, Middle Passage between the islands, and Seaconnet Passage on the east. At the north end of Rhode Island, opposite Tiverton on the mainland, Seaconnet Passage becomes very narrow and a ferry connected with the mainland. The town of Newport is at the southern tip of Rhode Island and was occupied by 3000 British under General Pigot (not, as Chaplain Van Horne thought, General Prescott).<sup>21</sup>

When the French fleet arrived in Narragansett Bay, they caught several British ships. The frigate *Cerberus* was trapped on the west side of Rhode Island and the captain ran her aground and scuttled her. Likewise the frigates *Juno*, *Orpheus*, and *Lark*, plus the sloop *Kingfisher* and galley *Pigot* were scuttled and burned. In Newport harbor itself, the frigates *Flora* and *Falcon*, plus several transports, were sunk to prevent the French fleet from approaching too closely. Thus British shipping was wiped out.<sup>22</sup>

Providence Aug't 6th 1778

My Dear Sir

Monday Evening ye 3d Inst we arrived near this place. Our Troops have sustained ye fatigues of ye march as well as could be expected & are now in fine Health and Spirits. Our affairs here ware a favorable Aspect. New Port harbor is effectually blocked by ye french fleet, on board of which is 3000 men who are ready to land whenever necessary. & ye French Admiral has obtained leave of General Sullivan to command them himself. General Varnums Brigade is moved about ye same time ours did. there are a Number of troops here of a Years enlistment & ye militia & militia Volunteers are gathering on every Quarter round us for our assistance & expect in a few Days to be 1200 strong. [The chaplain meant 12,000—Ed.] Gen'l Sulivan Chief in Command in this department, Gen'l Green commands ye right Wing; the Marquis ye left; Gen'l Glover & Varnum Divisions &c. Tomorrow morning we begin to move downwards towards New Port.

<sup>21</sup> Ward, 588.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 588.

This Day an Event happened w<sup>c</sup> will give you pleasure. two french ships 49 & 64 gun ship were at anchor at ye head of Conanicut Island. some English Frigate stationed at ye upper End of Rhode Island & some transports attempted to take some stores off of ye Island of Prudence w<sup>c</sup> is situate between ye Conanicut & Rhode Island. Mr. John Brown of this place advised ye Admiral to attack y<sup>m</sup>. he hoisted Anchor and stood up ye sound on w<sup>c</sup> ye English Frigates attempted to run down to New Port, having Prudence Island between them & ye french Ships. but one of ye french ships tacked & [came] between ye lower End of Prudence Island & a ledge of [rock] in ye Sound & cut off their Retreat upon w<sup>c</sup> ye frigates stood immediately to Rhode Island shore, disembarked & set fire to three frigates & four transports, & it is reported evacuated one of their Posts at ye upper End of Rhode Island & blowed up ye magazine. The former account is well Authenticated.

Their troops we hear are much dispirited, but y<sup>t</sup> Gen<sup>l</sup> Prescott commanding y<sup>m</sup> blusters & declares he will defend to ye last. Be that as it may we hope in a few Days divine Providence favoring us to give you further account of them. As I am now near Gen<sup>l</sup> Sullivans Head Quarters, as Letters may very easily be forwarded, shall hope to be favored with a Line from you.

Am Sir your Ob<sup>t</sup> Serv<sup>t</sup>

W<sup>m</sup> Van Horne

D'Estaing and Sullivan met and agreed on a plan of action. The Americans were to cross at the Tiverton ferry and storm the British defensive position at Butts' Hill on Rhode Island. The French would sail up the middle passage and land on the western side of the island. The two forces would then join and move south against Newport with the French moving down the western and the Americans the eastern sides of the island. At the conference, it was agreed that the operation would start the next day.

When the Americans arrived at Tiverton, however, they discovered that the works on Butts' Hill across the strait had been abandoned. Sullivan ordered them to cross immediately and take possession to prevent the British from re-occupying the position. D'Estaing, when he heard of this move, took offense that Sullivan, a major general, had taken precedence over himself, a lieutenant

general, and refused to cooperate further. Sullivan issued a formal order denouncing the French action, the only result of which was to destroy the confidence of the American troops. Within a few days five thousand of the militia went home, leaving Sullivan's army too weak to pursue the attack.<sup>23</sup>

In the meantime, a British fleet under Lord Howe appeared off Newport. The French sailed out to attack from a superior, upwind position. The fleets maneuvered for position for two days without the main forces joining battle, when a great storm came up, dispersing and seriously damaging both fleets.

The French fleet, with its three thousand soldiers still aboard, came back into the bay. Both Sullivan and LaFayette pleaded with D'Estaing to cooperate for only forty-eight hours to take the British at Newport, but the testy Frenchman refused and sailed for Boston to refit.<sup>24</sup>

When the French left, the British realized that Sullivan's army was greatly depleted and launched cautious attacks. Sullivan knew that the game was over and retreated to the mainland and to Providence. His timing was fortunate for the day after he recrossed to Tiverton large British reinforcements from New York landed at Newport, making a total force large enough that it could have completely crushed the Americans.<sup>25</sup>

With the French and Americans both out of the way, the British took the opportunity to punish some of the towns in the area, most notably New Bedford, as the chaplain described in the following letter.

Camp Providence Sept 9th 1778

Sir

I should have been glad it was in my power to say I had ye pleasure of receiving a Line from you since I have been to ye Eastward. This is ye third or fourth Letter forwarded to you since I left home in which I endeavored to communicate such intelligence as occurred & should be glad to hear in turn from ye place of my Nativity such intelligence as is Interesting. I have been favored with a comfortable measure of health & hope you have been favored with ye same inestimable Blessing. Religion here in general in ye same state

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 590.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

as in Pennsylvania. This place which so lately was a Nursery of Science, Commerce & friendly Arts is now a seat of infirmaries. Extortion & ye Vicinity of War; Grain of every kind very scarce. Indian corn 7 or 8 Dollars per Bushel; flower [blank] Dollars per hundred among ye Inhabitants. But ye troops well supplied with flower, fresh & salt provisions & healthy. Horses belonging to our army feel ye scarcity of Grain.

Before this will arrive you will have heard of ye result of our Expedition here, but perhaps not so particularly as you would wish to doe. I shall therefore endeavor to give a particular narration of our movements and operations after leaving this place on ye 6 of August. By ye 8th we advanced to Tivertown opposite ye North end of Rhode Island. This afternoon Count DeEasting moved with ye fleet up by New port & ye Enemies Batteries above ye Town, w<sup>c</sup> brought on a smart Cannonade from ye Enemy & was returned with spirit by ye fleet. Three frigates stood up ye Channal on ye East [side of] ye Island. three or four Rigaments of Brittish troops being stationed on ye north End of ye Island. upon our appearance on ye shore at Tivertown & ye moving up of ye fleet on each side of their flanks, retreated to New Port immediately, leaving two Redoubts on an advantageous Eminence called Butts's hill & ye barracks within y<sup>m</sup>, uninjured. A large number of boats being now ready for embarkation man'd by Volunteers & receiving intelligence ye following Night of ye Enemy's retreat, on ye 9th we embarked with great order & expedition and possessed ourselves of ye above mentioned Redoubts. This was an Acquisition we did not expect without a severe Conflict. there we found all ye wells, but such as escaped their Notice, filled up. every sort of farming utensil broke destroyed or taken off. This evening ye Brittish fleet appeared off N. Port Harbour. On ye 10th Instant ye french fleet hoisted sail, all but ye three frigates in ye East Channel, & stood down by ye Batteries w<sup>c</sup> brought on a brisk firing from ye ships giving a broad side as they passed. upon this Lord Howe's fleet hoisted sail & stood out to sea, Count DeEasting following & gaining upon him as far as could be discovered by Glass till Night. On ye 11th Evening Cloudy & by morning a North-easterly storm came on & Continued to in-

crease for two Day & was very severe indeed. The troops could not keep one third of the tents standing. 2d Night of ye storm that cloathing, arms, ammunition &c was much Damaged & many of ye troops fell sick & were removed off ye Island. on ye 14 Cleared up & this Day spent in cleaning up Arms, Examining & repairing cartridges, &c. On ye morning of ye 15th whole army, about 8 or 9 thousand advanced in three columns with facing Divisions & flanking Guards, extending across ye Island. halted within about 2 Miles of NewPort & began to raise batteries in ye Evening on a ridge of Land about a mile & 1/2 from ye town. next Day Enemies Cannon opened upon us. next Night our battery, so far compleated as to place our Cannon, return ye Compliment. to open new batteries in order to ye Reduction of ye Garrison when ye Count should return, which happened on ye 20th to ye great Joy of our troops; soon were mortified to find he could not stay to help us complete ye Seige, by reason of Damages sustained in ye storm, and wrisking an attack in y<sup>t</sup> Condition. on ye 21st or 22d sail'd for Boston. Our works were Continued; Enemy fortifying industiously; Smart cannonade from each side & throwing shells every Day & Night. but it was amazing to consider ye trifling Damages sustained on our side; but about 3 men killed & 4 or five wounded at most. By this time Volunteer Companies & many other engaged for a Short time began to return. I shall now refer you to ye inclosed account only adding y<sup>t</sup> G. Sullivan assures us y<sup>t</sup> from later accounts by prisoners exchanged y<sup>t</sup> were on parole since ye battle say their own estimation of killed, wounded, & missing is not less than a 1000 Men, and y<sup>t</sup> there seems thru ye whole of our Opperations, neither Wisdom in Council, Generalship, or Bravery in ye field wanting. & yet our raised expectations are disappointed. I leave you to ye Reflection y<sup>t</sup> naturally must arise from this relation.

On Saturday last about 3 OClock PM a Brittish fleet appeared off ye town of Bedford, & landed about 2500 Men on Clarks point 2 1/2 miles from Bedford town, to w<sup>c</sup> they marched & burnt all ye Shipping in ye Harbour, such as privateers &c and one french schooner. burnt ye Wharfs, Store Houses w<sup>c</sup> contained a Considerable Quantity of private & continental Stores; burnt 11 principal houses & plundered ye rest. thence they marched up the River on w<sup>c</sup>



they town [lies situated about 5 miles to] where great Quantities of public & private Stores [were kept] for greater safety. Burnt, destroyed, & plundered all in this place. went down ye other side ye river spreading Desolation before y<sup>m</sup> to a little village at ye mouth of ye river; set fire to y<sup>t</sup> and embarked immediately. killed two young Gentlemen in Bedford begging for Quarter; abused many of ye inhabitants whom they had plundered of every thing & were obliged to flee to ye Woods for safety. this I think is authentick. having no more bad news to communicate, I remain your [Humble] & Obt. servt.

Wm V Horne

After the failure of the Newport expedition, the American armies in New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island settled down to a position of watchful waiting, observing the British holed up in New York and Newport. Although it was not apparent at the time, in actual fact the last major battle of the war in the north had been fought.<sup>26</sup> The main theater of war moved to the Carolinas.

In the north, the primary worry had become the value of the currency. Backed by no assets, or even any taxing power, the Continental currency had never been anything more than a vague promise to pay in lawful money sometime in the future. As more and more millions of dollars' worth of this paper was issued, its value dropped precipitously. In the following letter the chaplain describes some of the results.

Providence Oct 6th 1778

Sir

I embrace an opportunity by Mr. Robison a Gentleman of this Town, to forward a few Lines hoping they will find you in a comfortable State of health, & in ye enjoyment of ye Divine presence. I have great reason to be, & trust I feel gratitude to GOD for ye measure of Health I enjoy. being called daily to visit ye hospital, of ye wounded and others languishing of infectious disorders, such as Diareahs, Dysentarys, and fevers. when I trust my labours have not been altogether in Vain. the Army in this place are not very sickly, & ye mortality among ye sick not very considerable. But ye

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 586.

sickness and mortality, especially among children, thro Connecticut, this state of ye Massachusetts, is extraordinary. there are some Towns to ye eastward of this where there is scarce a child left under three years old; and chiefly by w<sup>t</sup> is called ye Camp disorder.

As to news here we have none of much importance. One Crosen a very mischievous Villain and eight others were made prisoners attempting to steal & carry off some of the Inhabitants. they were brought to head Quarters monday evening. No appearance at presence of the Enemies leaving N.Port. the french fleet repairing very slowly at Boston.

The alarming depretiation of money this way is very distressing to those Worthy Citizens who have virtue enough to consult anything more than their private interest. the lowest price of merchantable flower at this place is 40 Dollars per CWt. In Boston near 50 Dolls. Indian Corn 8 or 9 Doll<sup>s</sup> per Bushel; Oats 4 Doll<sup>s</sup> per bushel among ye Inhabitants. Hay 60 Dollars per Ton, 80 at Boston. the lowest price ye Continent pays for Oats is three Doll<sup>s</sup> per bushel & hay as above & some of that very indifferent. a Marketman ye other day asked a Dollar per head for [cabbages?] &c, &c. Westindia goods rising Continually.

I cannot help being distressed y<sup>t</sup> I am so unfortunate, or neglected by my Friends. not a Line have I received from any one since I left home. I think I am writing to a person of sensibility & who has felt ye same anxiety. Unless you have entered into a *Determination* not to favor me with a Letter, pray write by Mr Robison who will have Business with Congress 10 or 12 Days. let me hear of ye Church & Congregation, ye situation of your public affairs, &c. My respects to yourself & family & all enquiring Friends, I remain, Dear Sir,

Your unworthy Brother

Wm Van Horne

N.B. if ye other letter for Mrs Van Horne should be delivered to your Care be pleased to send it by a safe hand as it contains some cash.

General Sullivan's army went into winter quarters in Providence, and Chaplain Van Horne went home for several months. The following spring, when field action was resuming, he rejoined the army at

Providence. One of the main items of discussion was the court-martial of General Benedict Arnold for profiteering while serving as military commander of Philadelphia. Arnold, one of the best fighting commanders in the American army, was bitter over this court-martial and it played a major role in causing him to decide to turn traitor.<sup>27</sup> His treason was discovered a year later.

General Sullivan was given command of an army in upstate New York in preparation for a move against the Six Nations of the Iroquois in the Mohawk and Susquehanna Valleys.<sup>28</sup> Glover's Brigade went back under direct command of General Washington.

Providence May 26th 1779

My Dear Sir,

The spring of ye Year 79 independant of ye distance I am at from my Family Connections & Country, is the longest I ever Knew. in ye beginning of March at Salem New Jersey peach trees were in full bloom; Elm trees had form'd their leaves. When I left home ye 10th of April All ye [fair?] of ye County was then in its Glory. By the time I arrived at this place it was almost Winter, & it was but last week apple trees were in blossom here.

The Prospect Divine providence has give us is exceeding fine. The frost that happened about the 18th of April has not, as hoped, been very prejudicial to the fruit trees. The Winter Grain is very promising. the farmers roused by the scarcity of Grain ye last Winter are exerting themselves, & have put in much larger crops of corn than common, ye most forward of w<sup>e</sup> is now just come up. The scarcity of this Article has been considerably removed by a great number of Vessels arriving in different ports from divers places with Corn and Rice. Many prizes have been sent in with flower, Rice, & other Provisions. Rice is in so great plenty y<sup>t</sup> the troops in this Army are ordered to draw two Rations of Rice per week instead of flower. The States of Massachusetts & Connecticut have contributed very considerably to the Relief of the Inhabitants of New Port, 971 of whom are in this town; 217 Males above twelve years old, 194 under y<sup>t</sup> age; 313 females above 12 Y & 247 under.

<sup>27</sup> Carl Van Doren, *Secret History of the American Revolution*, New York, 1941, 192.

<sup>28</sup> Lancaster, 375.

The Enemy at New Port have made two excursions lately in pursuit of cattle. the first to point Judith where they obtained a large number, but were hurried off by our troops at the lower Posts so as to leave 60 they had in Possession. The other was last friday morning. landed a party at Quidnessik, surprised and took a Serjent Lewis and eleven Blacks of Colo. Greens Regiment, Burnt the House of Mr. Allan, took him and two of his Neighbors prisoners, stole about thirty Cattle and some Sheep and went with so much precipitation as to leave a Sloop aground w<sup>ch</sup> fell into our hands and five men.

Yesterday morning four or five Hessian Deserters arrived at Head Quarters from Newport, two of them were Surgeons second mates, one a Corporal. they say no Reinforcement had arrived, but were led to expect it by the Officers. that they Enemy fear ye Arrival of a french & Spanish fleet & another Attack from this Army.

The Army here is very healthy. Col. Jackson was observing ye other Day y<sup>t</sup> he had not lost one man of his Regt by natural Death in fifteen months past. The pay of the army is now ye subject of uneasiness. They have just received 6 or 8 months pay & y<sup>t</sup> has so deprettiated that very trifles will take ye whole of it. and has become a matter of Indifference with many whether they receive any more of it in pay for Wages in its present State. The Resolutions of Pennsylvania Assembly respecting ye supplies of their troops is highly approved by this Army & tis hoped every state will see ye reasonableness of doing something similar.

Various are ye Opinions of Gen<sup>l</sup> Arnolds Affair among Gentlemen as I travailed thru the Country to this place. Some were for extenuating his Conduct, & others highly approved the Spirit of Council and wished them never to give it up [till] Justice [was] Done. Should be glad to hear how [it] was settled.

We hear very little news here of importance since ye Reduction of ye Onandaga Castle and the capture of the provision & store Vessels bound to Georgia. little or nothing transpires from Urope [*sic*], Congress, or grand Army. pray how are affairs in Pennsylvania? How does ye Republican Society flourish? Have Congress & Council settled matters amicably? How is ye Congregation supplied? It is reported

in Boston, but hardly beleived by some, that articles of peace are on ye Carpet in Congress. I am Dear Sir Your Affectionate Humble Serv't.

W<sup>m</sup> Van Horne

From the following letter it can be seen that Glover's Brigade continued its inactivity in Providence, watching the British at Newport. General Lincoln, commander of the American army in the Carolinas, occupied Augusta, Georgia, in a practically unopposed move.<sup>29</sup> This was the "victory" alluded to by the chaplain.

In the meantime, the currency continued to depreciate. Desperate attempts were made by groups of all kinds to try to hold up the value of the dollar. Congress had passed a law declaring it legal tender for all debts and making a debt null and void if the creditor refused to accept currency in payment. Later it fixed legal prices for a wide variety of goods, but with no enforcing power, the actions were all futile.<sup>30</sup>

The chaplain reported a rumor regarding General Baron von Riedesel of Brunswick, commander of the Brunswick and Hessian mercenary troops and second in command of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga. Burgoyne's surrender was called a "convention," under the terms of which the defeated troops were allowed to remain in formation under their own officers in exchange for their promise not to fight Americans again during the war. These defeated British and German troops were called "convention troops."

Riedesel, accompanied by his wife and three daughters, took the convention troops to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and later to Charlottesville, Virginia. The troops were housed in a camp outside Charlottesville and the officers lived in town. In what was certainly the strangest prisoner-of-war relationship in history, the Baron and Baroness obtained a house adjacent to Monticello and became good friends of Thomas Jefferson and many other American patriots. It was not true, however, that they became American citizens. When a prisoner exchange became possible, Riedesel loyally went back to the British army and served for the rest of the war fighting against his friends. It is clear that none of the participants thought that there was anything strange about this and the Riedesels maintained friendly

<sup>29</sup> Ward, 684.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Pitkin, *A Political and Civil History of the United States of America*, New Haven, 1828 (2 vols.), I, 154.

relations with their American acquaintances for the rest of their lives.<sup>31</sup>

Providence June 22, 1779

Dear Sir

I have not yet had ye pleasure of a favor from you since my arrival here, but don't doubt you have wrote before this time. We are anxiously awaiting to receive ye official Intelligence of Gen'l Lincoln's important Victory in Carolina on w<sup>c</sup> I most heartily congratulate you, as Well [on] Account of our Brethren there & your near Connection in particular, as on y<sup>t</sup> of ye United States in General. May we feel all y<sup>t</sup> Gratitude to the disposer of all Events w<sup>c</sup> so important a Conquest should inspire. the Intelligence from ye westward is tardy almost to criminality. ye first Notice of ye Enemies Depredations in Virginia was by a Man y<sup>t</sup> travelled from them parts on foot; as was also their advance up the north River.

Since I wrote to Esq<sup>r</sup> Wyncoop Yesterday I understand there are all ye appearance of about three Regim<sup>ts</sup> embarking from New York.

The Spirit of the Philadelphians is universally applauded there, and bids fair to pervade all this part of the Continent. the Bostonians are roused & have entered into very spirited measures. An extract of a letter from ye Secretary of their Council to a Colonel of our Brigade will give you a specimin, and is as follows: Viz. "Yesterday there was a large assembly of Merchants and others who manifested a greatness of Mind y<sup>t</sup> will doe them honor, and if our Brethren in the Country do but co-operate with them w<sup>c</sup> I make no doubt they will, we shall see our Currency Valuable. Circular letters will be sent through every part of this state as also to other States.[''] They have also resolved to punish the man who dares to make merchandise of silver money. The 15th of next month ye extra price of every Article to fall one half. The Merchants have Agreed to put in the continental loan office three times their Continental tax immediately to prevent further Emissions & if all ye states adopt this plan the Continent will be furnished with sufficient to carry on the war &c, &c.

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31 Tharp, 310-327.

The Massachusetts are about sending into ye field 1500 New troops to fill up their Battalions & raising 2000 to send to Gen'l Washington Which I presume are Militia or State troops.

We have a paragraph in ye papers here y<sup>t</sup> Gen'l Rhidehasel of the convention troop has purchased a large Estate in Virginia, taken the Oath of Allegiance to the States, &c. But hardly gains credence. pray is there any truth in it?

for further particulars respecting matters here I refer you to Mr Wyncoop letter dated yesterday. My respectful Compliments to ye Gentlemen in Council of my Acquaintance, to Mr. Gofourth, &c. I am in Health and Your Affectionate Humble Serv't.

Wm Van Horne

After a year's inactivity in New York, British General Henry Clinton ("Sir Harry" to the chaplain) made an offensive move up the Hudson, taking Stony and Verplanck's Points. Washington called Glover's Brigade to western Connecticut to form the left wing of the defending army. General "Mad Anthony" Wayne led an attack on Stony Point which succeeded brilliantly and resulted in the capture of a large force of British regulars.<sup>32</sup>

In the meantime, realizing that the American troops had been pulled toward the thrust up the Hudson, Clinton launched a punitive expedition against Connecticut towns. Between July 5 and July 11, British troops landing from ships at West Haven, burnt New Haven, West Haven, East Haven, Fairfield, Green's Farms, and Norwalk. Several hundred houses, plus churches, stores, mills, and other buildings were destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

In the south, the great Carolina hero General Moultrie had again beaten off an attack against Charleston at the time of the next letter.<sup>34</sup>

The city of Providence, where Chaplain Van Horne was stationed for so long was the center of Baptist activity in the United States. In fact, the Baptist Church was an outgrowth of the teachings of Roger Williams who founded Providence when he was banished

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<sup>32</sup> Ward, 596.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 619.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 684.

from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for his teachings.<sup>35</sup> When the Baptists finally became affluent enough to establish their own college, they placed it at Providence and called it the College of Rhode Island (now Brown University). The Rev. Mr. Van Horne was very interested in the college, was given an honorary A.M. degree by it, and was a close friend of its first president, Dr. John Manning.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Manning made a trip through New Jersey and Pennsylvania to Philadelphia to reunite the Baptists who had been scattered by the war and enemy occupation.<sup>37</sup> Chaplain Van Horne in the next letter implied that, in Manning's absence, he had ministered to the religious needs of the people of Providence, but now that he was gone, Manning would no doubt return.

General Sullivan's expedition against the Indian allies of the British was progressing favorably. George Rogers Clark's amazingly successful strokes against the British and Indians, which cleared the enemy out of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, had taken place a few months earlier.

Camp near Richfield July 27th, 1779  
[Ridgefield, N. Y.]

Dear Sir,

Your favor of ye 16th Ult. and enclosed were received Saturday last; your Letter and an enclosed Newspaper of July 3d was received yesterday for all w<sup>c</sup> I thank You, and shall remember with Gratitude your Attention to my family.

I don't know but I am able to inform you how ye false report w<sup>c</sup> amazed ye Continent so long respecting the brittish Army in Carolina was propagated. Two Brothers from Rhode Island were in Carolina together about ye fore part of May and heard a Cannonade at some Distance, one of them coming on this way raised ye report and propagated it thru the State to Philadelphia from thence to head Quarters, appeared before Gen'l Green, reported ye same story. the Gen'l having some knowledge of his Caracter put him to Oath

35 William Warren Sweet, *Religion on the American Frontier, The Baptists*, New York, 1931, 3.

36 Reuben Aldridge Guild, *Early History of Brown University, Including the Life, Times, and Correspondence of President Manning, 1756-1791*, Providence, 1897, 109-144, 276, 348, 386.

37 *Ibid.*, 312, 320.



w<sup>c</sup> he took & [then] treated him generously & made him a handsome present. to obtain this sort of treatment perhaps has been his inducement ; from thence he came to providence & set himself down at Greenwich. some time after ye other Brother came along & being interrogated by Gen'l Green he declared y<sup>t</sup> neither he nor his brother was in any Action, but only heard a cannonade at some considerable Distance. before I left Providence this person whose name I have forgot Was taken up and put under guard at Greenwich and on Saturday morning last a week I saw Col Greene & Col Ward at Governor [Grimes?] in order to Consult ye Governor Whether to try him by ye Civil or military law, w<sup>c</sup> they had not determined when I came away. And if I remember right most of ye concurring reports both by land and water came from places some considerable Distance from ye lines at Charleston y<sup>t</sup> it seem likely all to have originated with this Villain.

I shall be very glad considering ye scattered and destitute state of ye Baptist society in Philadelphia y<sup>t</sup> Mr. Manning should stay a few weeks there and wish he may be useful to the gathering of them together again, but expect my leaving Providence will facilitate his return.

In both your letters before me, you seem to depend very little on ye success of ye expedition under Gen'l Sullivan, but render no reason. and my ignorance of ye Country, ye Numbers, situation, and circumstances of either our Army or ye Enemy, forbid my judging in ye matter at all, escaping y<sup>t</sup> our Affairs on ye Western frontiers are flattering & hope ye gallant Colonel Clarks enterprise has prepared ye way for yet further success.

The spirit of your Committee has spread thru y<sup>a</sup> part of ye Continent, and a Convention has been called in Massachusetts State and have as is [heard?] entered on ye matter w<sup>th</sup> a great deal of Zeal. But if it only shall be a temporary prevention of a Yet greater Depretiation What will it avail to Your Armies to whom it is scarce ye name of money. especially when so great a part of them will quit ye service at ye end of the 3 Year elistments w<sup>c</sup> will arrive next Winter? *Necessity* Urgent Necessity must oblige us to some powerful Efforts to save y<sup>t</sup> ruin w<sup>c</sup> stares us in the face.

The early and plentiful harvest is a very pleasing Dispensation and demands our warmest Gratitude. The Winter Grain especially ye Wheat along ye sea coast & indeed in some places farther back in ye new England states has suffered a considerable blast. The Plundering of New Haven, ye treatment of ye Inhabitants, & destruction of buildings, & furniture (Public buildings excepted & College library) is an Instance of ye cruel and wanton Desolation of Brittons. But ye black burnt [stacks?] of Chimneys, scorched trees & gardens exhibit such a scene of Destruction & Distress of ye Inhabitants at fairfield, Norwalk, & part of east Haven as I never beheld. Yet must say this of them y<sup>t</sup> I saw appeared to bear up under their losses w<sup>th</sup> great fortitude.

We arrived at this post last Thursday; were halted here and are ye left of ye Whole army of Infantry. about a Reg<sup>t</sup> of Horse three miles below us, form ye lowest Part of ye Continental Army who with us are designed I believe to hang on ye flanks of the enemy, observe their motions, and prevent their Desolation of the Country. We understand y<sup>t</sup> Sir Harry is at New York; some troops at Verplancks point, East Chester, Kings bridge, &c. I congratulate you on ye success of Gen<sup>l</sup> Wayne at Kings ferry.

Capture of so considerable a number of ye best Infantry and grenadiers in ye enemies service; the attemps of Gen<sup>l</sup> C to divide our army, proving abortive as yet; and y<sup>l</sup>r movements down ye north river to so little purpose has I believe damped ye spirit of his army and tends to promote continual Desertions. Seven have come to general Glover at this place beside w<sup>t</sup> may have gone to other posts. their general Voice is y<sup>t</sup> they are tired of the War, and want an end of it.

I think we may be thankful y<sup>t</sup> we had a General Moultrie within ye lines at Charlestown & that ye Governor and Council must feel a Degree of Mortification y<sup>t</sup> they will not recover this Campaign. Congratulate you on ye safety of your friends in that place. My respects to all enquiring friends. Am Sir

Your Affect. humble Serv<sup>t</sup>.

Wm Van Horne

The letter to Mrs. Van Horne contains some Cash.

While Chaplain Van Horne was serving with the army and writing these letters to Colonel Hart in the legislature, the people of Pennsylvania were finding that the scheme of government established under the Constitution written by Hart, Van Horne, *et al.*, was sadly deficient. In actual fact, it was a strange parliamentary-type government with a unicameral legislature and no executive branch. Only a few years later, it was voided and the Constitution completely re-written.<sup>38</sup> In the meantime a kind of political party was forming around the "Anti-constitutionalist" position, as discussed by the chaplain in the following letter.

Camp August 26th, 1779

Dear Sir

I received your favor in about seven days after Date, and thank for ye very agreeable intelligence it contained. It was the first News we had of ye success of our Allies that arrived at this post. The success of our Enemies thus far will not very much contribute to humble America or make better terms of peace on their part. And as yet ye Completion of ye campaign in every Quarter is rather against them. If the Expedition ag<sup>st</sup> Penopscot should be compleated ye Dispensation of Divine Providence have exceeded our most sanguine Expectation. The superiority of our troops Infantry & Cavalry have been conspicuous in every attack by parties from this Army. There has been two skirmishes by parties of our light Horse & those of the Enemy in w<sup>c</sup> the Americans have displayed the greatest fortitude and alertness. At present we have no News, only a Report that the Enemy's shipping are gone up the north River w<sup>c</sup> if true may create some in a short time.

I am at a loss to account for ye Conduct of Your Anti-constitutionalists in opposing Your Choice of a Committee. from ye first publication in w<sup>c</sup> some of their names were mentioned I expected they were joining in ye measures w<sup>th</sup> considerable Unanimity. But must confess I feared some deep design was formed by them in a publication discanting on ye inefficiency of Government, & weakness or impracticality

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<sup>38</sup> Robert A. Weinert (Compiler), *Constitutions of Pennsylvania*, Harrisburg, 1964, 195, 237, 239-257.

of regulating those measures by laws ; w<sup>c</sup> if true I tho't was venturing on Dangerous Ground.

I am dear sir Your Affectionate Friend and Brother  
William Van Horne

In the following letter Chaplain Van Horne shows an understanding that no amount of organizational activity could stop the galloping inflation while the "fountain" of new paper money continued to flow.

In the reference to General Burgoyne it can be seen again that, after the surrender at Saratoga, Riedesel and his "convention troops" marched under the command of General Glover and very cordial relations existed between the defeated British and Germans and their captors.

During the fall of 1779 Washington waited expectantly for the rumored arrival of D'Estaing with a large fleet and army. He hoped that a final blow could be directed against the main British base at New York, ending the war. Week after week the army waited, expecting every day to be the great one. Not until November did word come that the French had joined General Lincoln in an attack on Charleston a month earlier and, after the attack was unsuccessful, had gone back to the West Indies.<sup>39</sup>

Camp Bedford October 2d, 79  
[Bedford, N. Y.]

Worthy Sir

Yours of the 14th of september was received in nine days after date & was very acceptable for its own sake, as well as for its companion. Mr. John Marks' has not yet come to hand. I was at a loss to know what was the reason y<sup>t</sup> all correspondence was stoped on ye side of my friends. concluded y<sup>t</sup> perhaps the letters were lodged in the Front Office near head Quarters till yours was received. I did intimate to Mrs Van Horne y<sup>t</sup> if the circumstances of the Campaign & of the Brigade would admit of it I would endeavor to pay her a Visit but ye expectations we had of a french fleet to co-operate with us & our circumstances in other Respects has

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39 Flexner, 352.

forbid my making any Essay towards it as yet.

We have no news in Camp at present but it is very old & w<sup>t</sup> you must be acquainted with; except that we have three more in the Provo who have ye caracters of Pilots to the Enemy, spies, horse thieves, House plunderers & burners. One of the Inhabitants who has his all destroyed by one of them, meeting with the General y<sup>t</sup> Commands this post at the provo, dismounted his horse, fell upon his knees & plead as for his own life, for leave to revenge himself upon the offender; but is reserved for a more deliberate Execution.

The Exertions of Committees have not I believe answered ye sanguine expectations of many, tho perhap they may have given a Considerable check to the Depretiation, w<sup>c</sup> I believe to be the Case towards ye Eastwards, but its influence has not reached the Camp as Yet. I shall be glad y<sup>t</sup> our Legislature may be successful in combating the Streams, while the fountain continues to emit Inundations. The Affairs of the College recommended to the Assembly is entirely new to me. I feel in common with You for the Republican Party, & wish their Depretiation [*i.e.*, multiplication—Ed.] may outdo that of the Currency; & hope this month will bring them to a greater sensibility of their importance than they have experienced yet.

I was glad to hear Mr Fleeson had taken a tour to Virginia. It is ye largest & most probable field of Usefulness for our ministers of perhaps any in America. And I wish his Usefulness & happiness there may outdo his expectations. I am sorry to hear that Mr Blackwell has been so unfaithful. But we have not been strangers to his want of punctuality heretofore, tho' must think, if his health wo'd permit, it is considerably aggravated from ye Consideration of the Society depending wholly on supply's. What effect it may have on them as to futurity is hard for me to say. I wish it may be salutary.

As far as I am able to guess, from present appearances, little more will be done this Campaign. The french & spanish fleets before the Bay according to report have a greater Object in View than assisting us here, & I begin to despair of their arriving here at all this Season, & without them nothing more than small advantages, if they offer, will be taken. I informed Mr Wyncoop some Days ago that Ver-

Planck's point was evacuated by the Enemy, but it does not prove true.

I thank you for ye paper sent me. Gen'l Glover read the address to Gen'l Burgoyne with pleasure & is very confident y<sup>t</sup> Gen'l Burgoyne or some of his friends are the authors, and is designed to introduce explanations which General Burgoyne has not before been permitted to give. Gen'l Glover had ye Command of the Convention troop from Saratoga to Cambridge. Gen'l Burgoyne frequently mentioned to him ye sentiments contained in y<sup>t</sup> address. Gen'l Glover says he [said] "I never was an Enemy to the Liberties of America &c.; I had ye most pointed orders respecting this Expedition; had no will of my own, &c; But my Honor is [defended] & is Dearer to me than Both Countries.["] That his Conduct must be set in a proper light.

Am Dear Sir Your Affectionate friend & Brother

Wm Van Horne

In early fall 1779, fearing the arrival of D'Estaing's force, the cautious British General Clinton gave up further offensive action and pulled back into New York. He evacuated Stony Point (which the Americans had abandoned after Wayne's victory there), Verplanck's Point, and also Newport, where the troops had been in occupation since 1776.<sup>40</sup> Glover's Brigade moved to the banks of the North River (Hudson) at modern Croton-on-Hudson, close to Verplanck's Point.

Inflation had become so bad that laboring people were desperate. Not understanding the cause of their misfortune, they tended to blame merchants or the few speculators who were profiting from it. In Philadelphia a mob gathered and attacked the house of one James Wilson, a wealthy lawyer, into which some thirty merchants and traders had gathered for safety. One man inside the house was killed and several of the attackers shot down before a body of cavalry came up and dispersed the mob.<sup>41</sup>

Camp at Croton October 27th, 1779

Dear Sir

Your favor of the 9th Instant was received the 23d, And also yours of the last of September with Mrs Van Hornes. But Mr John Hart's has not come to hand yet. The news of

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Commager and Morris, II, 810.

ye Mob had reached camp before your letter was received, but the accounts were so confused y<sup>t</sup> one did not know what to believe. w<sup>c</sup> rendered yours particularly acceptable. The manner of conducting that unhappy affair, without an avowed object or plan & the secrecy of their abettors renders it extraordinary indeed, as does also the Convention of those Anti-constitutional Gentlemen & ye manner of preparing themselves for what followed. By this time many Circumstances perhaps have come to light w<sup>c</sup> may render this affair less mysterious. The Army were surprised, & feared a rapid Depretiation would follow. I am sorry to inform you that the Town of Boston, by the last intelligence from thence was nearly ripe for a Rupture of the same nature. the [inflation?] of prices of Goods and Merchandise has shut up the Shops, Ruined the markets insomuch the Citizens are obliged to goe out into the country to obtain ye Necessaries of life & find great Difficulty to procure them unless they have Tea Sugar &c &c to exchange for w<sup>t</sup> they want. Wood stipulated at 45 Dollars cannot be had for 100 & some say to 200 Dollars per Cord.

I congratulate you on the Evacuation of Stony and VerPlanck Points. I was yesterday to see their ruins. Stony Point was very strongly fortified indeed, & every circumstance seemed to show y<sup>t</sup> when they rebuilt it after Waynes Attack, they expected to winter there.

The French Fleet has not yet arrived. Every preparation in the Army is making for them, & our Patience tried in waiting for them. This However is the case with me. the Circumstances of My family required my being at Home before now, but the daily expectation of the Fleet has prevented hitherto. Had I known they would have delayed till this time no Considerations would have prevailed on me to have been absent till now without being at home a few Weeks. The long time the fleet has been expected has gave the Enemy time to make every preparation and collect force wherever it is to be had. beside those from Stony Point, all the troops at Rhode Island are embarking or embarked & ready to sail last thursday for New York. It all waits. If the french Count arrives, we may expect very serious work.

I am glad to have it in my power to acquaint you that there are some places where the Grace of God is manifested.

at a town in the western part of the Massachusetts State there is a comfortable revival of Religion in a little Baptist Church there. Near this Encampment there is a neighborhood of people amongst whom the Gospel has been effectual, and am engaged in the things of Religion. Colonel Ethan Allen who has made a considerable figure as a soldier, & was an avowed Deist, Has lately been converted to the Christian faith, & is believed to be a pious man. this Gentleman resides in Vermont & is ye same y<sup>t</sup> was made prisoner in Canada & sent Home to England.

It will be no pain to you to be told that almost all the revivals of Religion for some considerable time past has been among the Baptist Societies especially in New England. Would that ours in Pennsylvania might feel the powers of Quickening Grace. I am Dear Sir

Your Affectionate Brother & Humble Servant  
Wm Van Horne

N.B. pray w<sup>t</sup> [me?] for an association. Had you?

Thus ended the series of letters. Chaplain Van Horne went home again for the winter and returned to duty in the spring of 1780. But the long and frustrating inactivity of the army caused him to develop more concern for his family and his parishioners in Pennsylvania than for the army. In May 1780 he requested a discharge which was granted by General Washington. The original of that document still exists and is on display at the Rutherford B. Hayes Memorial Library at Fremont, Ohio.<sup>42</sup>

The sequel to the story is well known. Washington's army was inactive for the third year in a row throughout 1780 while war raged in the Carolinas. A French army under Rochambeau arrived and went into camp in Rhode Island. Inflation progressed to the point of absolute disaster when, by the end of 1780, the Continental dollar had literally lost all value and ceased to circulate.<sup>43</sup> From then on trade was carried on by barter or by the circulation of foreign coins.

In 1781, Washington's and Rochambeau's armies moved south, joined the southern army and the French under De Grasse and caused

<sup>42</sup> See also letter of Col. William Shepard to General Washington, written from Highlands (N.Y.), May 26, 1780, National Archives, Washington, D. C. The colonel reported that the Rev. William Van Horne was "very Desirous" of a discharge "on the account of his Domestic affairs," and recommended that it be granted.

<sup>43</sup> Pitkin, 157.



the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia, ending the military activity of the war.<sup>44</sup>

Chaplain Van Horne returned to his flock at Southampton, but in 1785 accepted the pastorate at Scotch Plains, New Jersey.<sup>45</sup> In this parish were a number of people who later became prominent in the settlement of Cincinnati and the Ohio country. In 1788, a group of them, including John Stites Gano and William Goforth, came down the Ohio River and founded Columbia, the first settlement within the present city limits of Cincinnati.<sup>46</sup> Another group, which went to Maysville, Kentucky, included three-year-old Daniel Drake, later to become the great pioneer physician and founder of the Cincinnati Medical College.<sup>47</sup>

Doctor Drake, in his classic *Pioneer Life in Kentucky*, described a visit in 1795 from their old pastor from New Jersey, the Rev. William Van Horne. Writing fifty years later, he said: "No other man living could have produced so deep an impression on the hearts of the whole . . . He still wore a three cornered cocked hat, dressed in black broad cloth, was a fine looking old gentleman, of good intelligence, and now and then fell into a fit of laughter that would make his face as red as if it had been tinted with Carmine."<sup>48</sup>

Impressed by what he saw and the enthusiastic reports of the fertility of the land, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne decided to purchase a section of land in Ohio for his old age and for his children. He gave his power of attorney to his friends Gano and Goforth and asked them to select the most desirable tract they could find.<sup>49</sup> In 1797, they bought for him a section (one square mile) of beautiful land just east

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44 Flexner, 451-461.

45 William Cathcart, *The Baptist Encyclopedia*, Philadelphia, 1881, 1187. Also letter from Oliver Hart, Hopewell, New Jersey, to his brother, Col. Joseph Hart, April 18, 1785, quoted in William W. H. Davis, *History of the Hart Family*, Doylestown (Pa.), 1867, 54. The writer expressed sorrow that the Rev. Mr. Van Horne must "leave Southampton for want of a living."

46 Sweet, 28-29. E. H. Roseboom and F. P. Weisenburger, *A History of Ohio*, 56.

47 Emmet Field Horine, *Daniel Drake, Pioneer Physician of the Midwest*, Philadelphia, 1961.

48 Daniel Drake, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky, 1785-1800*, New York, 1948, 221.

49 William Van Horne, of Essex County, New Jersey, appointed John Stites Gano and William Goforth his attorneys to defend his interests in territories northwest of the Ohio as if he himself were present. Signed at Columbia, October 28, 1795, witnessed by John Reiley [sic] and Aaron Goforth. Registered in *Record of Deeds and Mortgages Transcribed from Hamilton and Butler Counties*, Book 1, 188, Warren County Courthouse, Lebanon, Ohio.

of the present city of Lebanon, Ohio.<sup>50</sup>

Ten years later, in 1807, the Rev. Mr. Van Horne realized he was in failing health and had little time left. He resigned his pastorate and made provisions to transport himself and his wife, his six unmarried daughters, his son and daughter-in-law, and two family retainers to the new country. The story of that journey, in the form of a diary kept by Eliza, one of the daughters, was published in 1939 by The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.<sup>51</sup>

The chaplain did not complete the journey. He died en route and was buried in Pittsburgh. But his family continued on and settled in Lebanon where they lived long and happy lives. The son, Thomas Budd Van Horne, became a Lieutenant Colonel in the War of 1812 and commanded the American forces in the first land battle of that war.<sup>52</sup> His letters from the army to General John Stites Gano, comprising a serial narrative very similar to these from his father to Colonel Hart, were published by the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio (now the Cincinnati Historical Society) in 1920.<sup>53</sup>

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50 In a mortgage registered May 1, 1805, William Van Horne described his land as Section No. 30, Military Range, Warren County, State of Ohio; conveyed to him by Benjamin Stites, June 7, 1797. Deed recorded in Book BN2, pages 134 and 135, Hamilton County. "Contains 640 acres of first rate land." This is in Book 1, *Record of Deeds and Mortgages Transcribed from Hamilton and Butler Counties*, Warren County Courthouse, Lebanon, Ohio.

This land extends one mile eastward and one mile northward from the intersection of modern Ohio Routes 7 and 12, one mile east of the center of Lebanon. About two-thirds of the section is flat, "bottom land," extremely rich and productive. The northeastern part is a gently sloping ridge at the top of which are beautiful home-sites, presently occupied by very well kept farm buildings.

51 Elizabeth Collette (Ed.), *Journey to the Promised Land, Journal of Elizabeth Van Horne, 1807*, The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, 1939.

52 Alec R. Gilpin, *The War of 1812 in the Old Northwest*, E. Lansing, Michigan, 1958, 95-97. In 1813, Major Van Horne with 200 militia was ambushed near present Trenton, Michigan, by a party of Indians under Tecumseh. At the first shot most of the militia turned tail and ran. The officers, under Major Van Horne, tried hard to rally the men and suffered heavy casualties in doing so. The battle is known as the Battle of Brownstown Creek, or Van Horne's Defeat. The major was made quite a hero for his own actions during the battle, and was given the highest reward the government could then give him, a commission as Lieutenant Colonel in the Regular Army.

53 "Selections from the Gano Papers," *Quarterly Publication of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio*, XV (1920), 49, 69, 72, 80, 103.