



While New York City burns on 21 September, 1776, residents flee as the British summarily execute those suspected of arson. In the end, one-quarter of the city, including Trinity Church, was destroyed. Throughout the seven years of British occupation that followed, New York City was a refuge for Loyalists, who had to endure military rule and shortages of food, firewood, potable water and other necessities of life. [Francois Xavier Habermann - circa 1776. Eno Collection, New York Public Library. Used by permission.]

## Chapter 9

### Patriots and Loyalists 1765~1783

#### *The Seeds of Revolution*

The American Revolution, it is said, began not in 1776, but rather bubbled to life more than a decade earlier - in 1765 - when Colonists united to oppose Parliament's *Stamp Act*. This was one in a series of taxes imposed by the British to pay the costs of their military presence in America. In 1763, responding to Indian warfare in the west, England had established the *Proclamation Line*, an imaginary boundary which closed the area west of the Appalachian Mountains to settlement by Europeans. The British decided to station soldiers in the colonies, to house them in colonists' homes, and to tax these colonists for the "protection" the soldiers provided.<sup>1</sup> From London's point of view it all made perfect sense. Through the eyes of many colonists, it was an intolerable breach of their freedom: it was *taxation without representation*.

Nowhere was reaction to the *Stamp Act* more rabid than in New York City, where the 1764 *Sugar Act*, a modest toll on molasses brought to America from the West Indies, was already wiping out the profits of New York's merchant importers. Quite frankly, most Americans failed to see the need for British troops, now that France had been defeated. So merchants allied with the *leather aprons* - the poorer, disenfranchised artisans, sailors, and shopkeepers - to forcefully oppose the landing of the hated tax stamps on 23 October, 1765. Adding fuel to the fire was the British garrison commander's rather undiplomatic declaration that he was prepared to "*cram the stamps down the throats of the people*." In fact, much of the protest was orchestrated by the *Sons of Liberty*, a radical group led by merchant/shipmaster Isaac Sears. When the British finally relented in the spring of 1766 and repealed the Stamp Act, the *Sons of Liberty* defiantly erected a "*Liberty Pole*" in the public fields.<sup>2</sup>

But New York's merchant elite feared the mob violence accompanying the anti-British protests, probably sensing that these were also protests against the propertied classes of New York. In 1770, the British Redcoats pulled down the *Liberty Pole* for the fourth time in as many years, and Isaac Sears and his *Sons of Liberty*, vowing revenge, confronted the British at a spot known as *Golden Hill*. Fists and brickbats opposed swords and bayonets in this fracas, which drew "*the first blood of the Revolution*."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Millett, A., and Maslowski, P., "For the Common Defense, A Military History of the United States of America," Macmillan, New York, 1984, pp. 48-49.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, O., "New York, New York," Anthaneum, New York, 1990, pp. 56-59.

<sup>3</sup> Allen, pp. 60-62.

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The moderate and conservative merchants, headed by Isaac Low, formed a *Committee of 51* after further demonstrations in 1774 (this time against a tax on tea) threatened to devolve into anarchy. They successfully out-maneuvered the *Sons of Liberty* by proposing a colony-wide assembly to be called the *Continental Congress*. Little did they realize that their brainchild would later become the chief engine of organized rebellion. The Continental Congress voted to boycott all imports and exports to and from Great Britain, and delegated local extra-legal groups like the *Committee of 51* to enforce the embargo. Unwilling to play the role of enforcer, the conservative *Committee of 51* dissolved itself, only to be replaced by a new, more radical, *Committee of 60*. By April of 1775, when hostilities broke out at Concord and Lexington, this new committee had enlarged itself to 100 members and had become the *de facto* government of New York City, replacing the old Provincial Assembly, which adjourned itself on 3 May, never to meet again.<sup>4</sup>

By late 1774, King George III, finally realizing the seriousness of the situation, declared the American Colonies *in revolt* and declared that “*blows must decide whether they are to be subject to this country or independent.*”<sup>5</sup> The stage was now set for the outbreak of full-scale war.

#### ***A Young Man From Staten Island***

By 1774, a young man from Staten Island had stepped into the political ferment of New York City. He was Andreis Van Tuyl, the grandson of pioneer farmer Abraham Van Tuyl and the son of farmer and ferrymaster Otto Van Tuyl. He had, for whatever reason, decided to seek his fortune in the growing metropolis:<sup>6</sup>

*New York in the decade preceding the Revolution was a Dutch town slowly changing into a provincial English city. Visitors who attended services in the New Dutch Church, on Nassau Street, heard one Sunday the Reverend Lambertas de Ronde preach in Dutch, the next the Reverend Archibald Laidlie preach in English. Those who went, basket in hand, to shop at the Fish Market on Dock Street, or the Old Slip Market, found it difficult to make purchases unless they spoke Dutch.*

But New York was then, as it always had been, a cosmopolitan town. Irish, Germans, Jews, and Scots had joined the English, Dutch, and French in this trading capital of North America. Numerous Blacks, both slave and free, along with quite a few Indians added to the melting pot.<sup>7</sup>

Although Andreis Van Tuyl was 100% Dutch, when he came to New York City he decided to cultivate an “English” identity. He became *Andrew* Van Tuyl, shopkeeper. In August of 1773, Andrew married Maria [Mary] Bogert, daughter of Peter Bogert, a property-owning Dutch

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<sup>4</sup> Allen, pp. 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> Millett and Maslowski, pg. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Wertenbaker, T.J., “Father Knickerbocker Rebels,” Scribner’s, New York, 1948, Pg. 14.

<sup>7</sup> New York’s population in 1771 was 22,763 [Abeel, Garret, in “*Domine Selyn’s Records*”, Holland Society of NY, 1916]. Perhaps as many as 20% were slaves, based on earlier censuses [Goodwin et al., “Historic New York,” 1897, vol. 1, pg. 29].

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businessman of New York City.<sup>8,9,10</sup> Andrew's sister, Femmitje - now *Phebe* - had the year before married Peter Barberie, scion of the Huguenot merchant family of Captain Otto Van Tuyl's pirate days.<sup>11,12</sup> Along with a partner (probably Abraham Varick) Andrew established himself in business: *Van Tuyl and Varick, at the Royal Exchange, New York*.<sup>13</sup> We don't know what Andrew's first business venture was, but we do know that after the Revolution he became a dry goods retailer at 24 Front Street, and that he then lived, as he likely did from the time of his marriage, in a house at 46 Water Street which was provided by his father-in-law Peter Bogert.<sup>14,15</sup>

Besides Anglicizing his name, Andrew Van Tuyl of New York made a key decision, perhaps more of a political statement than a religious one: he joined Trinity Church.<sup>16</sup> Trinity had long been the church of the establishment - and in those times, the establishment were *Loyalists*, that is, supporters of English power and the British *Tory* party. As the mother church of the official *Church of England* in New York, Trinity derived funds from a tax levied on *all* of New York's citizens - whatever their religion. The *dissenters* - Dutch Reformed, Moravians, and Presbyterians, for example - were probably happy enough not to be suppressed by the Crown (it had confiscated their property back in the time of Governor Combury)<sup>17</sup> and they did not dare to openly oppose Trinity's subsidies, though they deeply resented them.<sup>18,19</sup>

Not surprisingly, churchgoers of all denominations got political advice from their ministers:<sup>20</sup>  
*...Trinity [rector] Dr. Auchmuty argued that God was on the side of the King; [at] North Dutch Church or the Scotch Presbyterian Church, the Reverend John H. Livingston and Dr. John Mason were sure He favored the defenders of American liberty.*

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<sup>8</sup> Cramer, A., "Notes on the Van Tuyl Family," 1959, pg. 11. Cites: Unpublished Bible Records together with Genealogical notes and other unpublished Data compiled by Edith Balsford Swancott, Chairman, Genealogical Records Committee, NY State Society of DAR, 1928-1929; and NYGBR vol. 30, Dutch Reformed Church, NY.

<sup>9</sup> Warner, P.R., "The Family of Peter Willemse Roome," 1883.

<sup>10</sup> The Will of Peter Bogert, in *Collections of the New York Historical Society, Abstracts of Wills*, vol. XIV, 1905, pp. 306-308.

<sup>11</sup> Cramer, pg. 11, cites: *New York Marriages*, vol. XVIII, pg. 105

<sup>12</sup> "Family Record: Barberie," in *NYGBR*, Oct, 1992, pp. 207-209.

<sup>13</sup> NJ Archives, first series, vol. XX, Newspaper Abstracts, vol. X, 1773-1774, pg. 492. The identity of Abraham Varick as Andrew's partner is not certain, but is likely, given that Abraham Varick co-witnessed a will with Andrew in 1798 [NYHS Wills, vol. XV, pg. 149 [Henry Seaman], and that Abraham Varick later became Phebe Van Tuyl's 3rd husband [NYGBR, Oct, 1992, pp. 207-209].

<sup>14</sup> New York City Directory, 1789.

<sup>15</sup> Will of Peter Bogert

<sup>16</sup> His children were baptised in Trinity Church. [Cramer, pg. 11]

<sup>17</sup> Wilson, J., "Memorial History of the City of New-York," New York, 1892, pp. 63, 82-83.

<sup>18</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 18.

<sup>19</sup> This was one reason why the United States Bill of Rights later separated Church and State.

<sup>20</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 49-50.

So as armed conflict approached in 1774 through 1776, people's political positions adjusted with circumstance, and eventually hardened into one of two sides: Patriot [*Whig*] or Loyalist [*Tory*]. Andrew Van Tuyl's associations and subsequent actions tell his story: he sided with the Loyalists.

### ***War Comes to New York***

When a messenger from Massachusetts galloped into New York on 23 April, 1775 to announce the outbreak of hostilities at Concord and Lexington, Isaac Sears and the Sons of Liberty lost no time in mobilizing the mob. They paraded through the town, gathering supporters as they went, stormed the armory and closed down the port. Scores of Tories, afraid for their own safety, temporarily joined the mob.<sup>21</sup> On 29 April, Isaac Low addressed a crowd of six to seven thousand New Yorkers, demanding that they sign an "Association" pledging loyalty to the Continental Congress. Sensing the inevitable, panicked New Yorkers started to flee.<sup>22</sup> Several weeks later, the British garrison retreated to H.M.S. *Asia*, a warship anchored in New York harbor.<sup>23</sup>

By 14 June, news had arrived that British troops were leaving England, bound for New York. Fear gripped the city. When jittery New Yorkers fired on the H.M.S. *Asia's* barge on 23 August, 1775, killing a sailor, the *Asia* returned fire. It caused no real harm, but did panic the city's inhabitants to such a degree that within two weeks fully one-third of them had fled town.<sup>24</sup> By the winter of 1775-76, New Yorkers smelled war. Washington's chief lieutenant, gout-afflicted General Charles Lee, was carried into New York to organize its defenses just as General Sir Henry Clinton arrived in the harbor on board the H.M.S. *Mercury*. More New Yorkers fled, either northward by land, or across the icy river to New Jersey by boat.<sup>25</sup> The colonial troops poured into the city on 7 February, starting with the arrival of William Alexander - called *Lord Stirling* - and his 1000 New Jersey militiamen, who were followed soon after by troops from New England. Many newly-arrived patriots settled themselves into abandoned Tory mansions, prompting one observer to lament:<sup>26</sup>

*Oh, the houses in New York, if you could but see the insides of them, occupied by the dirtiest people on the continent!*

William Tryon, the British Governor, had retreated to General Clinton's ship by 16 March. He issued a final plea for the citizens of New York return to the fold, urging the local Tories, much to their peril, to resist the revolutionary pressure. But the British were too weak to attract any

<sup>21</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 54. The Tories of course recanted when the British conquered the city.

<sup>22</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 56, 63.

<sup>23</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 58.

<sup>24</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 71.

converts, and by 13 April, when Washington arrived to occupy New York City, they had put out to sea.<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Redcoats Arrive in Force***

The situation changed dramatically on 29 June, 1776. On that day, more than 100 British ships entered New York Bay, having finally arrived from England after a rest stop in Nova Scotia. Two weeks later, a second fleet of 150 ships arrived from London, under the command of Admiral Richard Howe, brother of Commander-in-Chief Sir William Howe. A *third* fleet arrived from Charleston soon after, bringing the total to nearly 500 British ships (carrying some 32,000 soldiers), the largest British expeditionary force ever assembled up to that time. On 2 July, 10,000 of these troops were landed on Staten Island, beginning the occupation of that Loyalist-oriented county for the seven-year duration of the war.<sup>28</sup>

By midsummer of 1776, independence had been declared, and the civilian population of New York City was down to 5,000: there had been 25,000 residents the year before.<sup>29</sup> Washington had assembled 18,000 troops against Howe's 32,000. In addition to numerical superiority, Howe had command of the waterways, so he could land those troops wherever he wished. Washington stationed part of his men in New Jersey, then split the rest between Manhattan and the strategic Brooklyn Heights. By August, he was awaiting Howe's attack.

Andrew Van Tuyl, along with his pregnant wife Mary and 2-year-old son John, had probably fled New York City before mid-summer, 1776. Logically, they would have sailed across New York Bay to seek refuge with friends or relatives in what was now British-occupied Staten Island. On 5 August, Mary gave birth to her first daughter, Catherine Van Tuyl.<sup>30</sup> Like most New York Loyalists, they would have waited and watched, hoping their homes might survive the certain conquest of New York City by Lord Howe's troops. They didn't have long to wait.

On 22 August, the British ferried a large body of troops across the old *Dennis's Ferry* route from Staten Island to Gravesend Bay, landing unopposed. Howe added a detachment of German mercenaries - called *Hessians* - a few days later, bringing his troop strength to 20,000. Washington had stationed Israel Putnam, John Sullivan, and Lord Stirling in strong positions at Brooklyn heights. Opposing them were General Henry Clinton and Lord Cornwallis, who on 26 August struck the undefended Jamaica Road with 10,000 troops, routing the Americans. Stirling's flank was exposed and he was nearly encircled, with no chance of escape. In a desperate and

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<sup>27</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 74-75.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, pg. 68.

<sup>29</sup> Allen, pg. 67.

<sup>30</sup> Warner, P. R. "Family of Peter Willemse Roome," 1883. [LDS Film 1321278 Item 5]. Cramer erroneously gives a birthdate of 5 Aug., 1777 - unlikely, based on the subsequent birth of second daughter Maria, on 5 May, 1778. Unlike Maria, Catherine's baptism is not recorded in Trinity Church.

heroic move, he took a handful of men to attack Cornwallis while the rest of his troops fled through the swamps. Stirling himself was captured that day, along with General Sullivan. The revolutionaries were defeated and demoralized, but due to lack of aggressiveness by the British, they were not annihilated, as they might well have been. The bedraggled and discouraged American troops retreated to Manhattan Island under cover of darkness and fog on 29-30 August.<sup>31</sup>

Rejecting advice to abandon New York City, Washington planned a desperate defense. Troops would be deployed in the city and at strategic points as far north as Harlem Heights. They had simply to wait for a British attack from the East river. It came on 14 September, with five British frigates stationing themselves in the East River, followed the next morning by a fleet of small boats carrying red-coated soldiers bound for Manhattan. The rebels fled the withering fire of the frigates' grapeshot-loaded cannons, leaving the island's shores open to unopposed landing by Redcoats and Hessians.<sup>32</sup> Hearing news of the invasion, Washington galloped down towards Kip's Bay:<sup>33</sup>

*When he arrived at Murray's farm, he found the militia fleeing before the British van, throwing aside arms, knapsacks, hats and even coats in their haste to get away. Ignoring them, he tried to form the reinforcements in a line. "Take to the walls!" he shouted. "Take to the cornfield!" Some of Parson's men obeyed, but in "a confused and disordered manner." Then panic seized them, too, and they broke and fled. Washington, Putnam and Mifflin tried desperately to rally them, even laying the cane on the backs of some fugitives, but in vain. All was "fright, disgrace, and confusion." "Are these the men with which I am to defend America?" Washington is said to have exclaimed, dashing his hat to the ground. So outraged was he that he would have remained on the field to be captured, had not an aide seized the rein of his horse and turned him back.*

The New York City garrison seemed doomed to capture, too. But they effected a remarkable retreat in sweltering heat through the woods of western Manhattan Island, while the British proceeded up the east side just out of sight. Guided by young Major Aaron Burr, the 3000 exhausted troops arrived at the American position at Harlem Heights, north of today's West 125th St., ready to fight another day.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Retreat from New York***

Psychology is everything in war, and after the inglorious retreat to Manhattan and the rout at Kip's Bay, the rebel army was desperately in need of a confidence boost. It came the following day in the form of a small but inconclusive engagement between the Americans and a force of kilted Black Watch Britishers who made the mistake of pursuing a retreating party of American scouts up a

<sup>31</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 91-93; Allen, pp. 67-68. Both Stirling and Sullivan were later released as part of a prisoner exchange.

<sup>32</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 94-95.

<sup>33</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 96.

<sup>34</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 97, Allen, pg. 71.

hollow near today's 125th street:<sup>35</sup>

*...one of the [Black Watch] buglers sounded a [fox] hunting call signalling that the quarry is at bay. Washington, furious, ordered a counterattack. His troops pushed the British back to a buckwheat field near the present site of Barnard College, where a fierce two-hour battle ensued, after which the British gradually withdrew, pursued by yelling and whooping rebels...The British were not invincible after all. As Washington's adjutant general, Joseph Reed, wrote to his wife, "You can hardly conceive the change it has made in our army. The men have recovered their spirits and feel a confidence which before they had quite lost.*

Confident or not, Washington's army was on the run as he withdrew from Manhattan to Westchester County, New York. Howe pursued the Americans to White Plains, defeated them, and sent Washington scurrying toward New Jersey. Finally, on 16 November, 1776, the American rear guard holding Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River fell after fierce fighting. On 24 November, Cornwallis took Fort Mifflin, across the Hudson from the fallen Fort Mifflin. The young American Revolution was off to a disastrous start, having lost several hundred killed and 4,400 captured in the unsuccessful defense of New York City.<sup>36</sup>

The militarily smart move would have been for Washington to burn New York City to the ground immediately upon retreat. Many of his staff recommended this course of action. But Washington consulted the Continental Congress, which ordered that the city be spared. When Washington replied that he would "*do everything in [his] power*" to prevent the burning, he was probably anticipating the inevitable conflagration that started on 21 September - against his orders - in a small wooden house on a wharf near Whitehall Slip [Otto Van Tuijl's old ferry terminal].<sup>37</sup> The city had not yet been occupied by the British, and the retreating Americans had taken the church bells - which were the city's fire alarm - to melt down for cannon. The fire spread rapidly among the wood-shingled houses, perhaps being aided by saboteurs. A number of British sailors came ashore to help the loyalists, and together, in the midst of fighting the raging conflagration, they apprehended and summarily executed anyone suspected of arson.<sup>38</sup> When the fire's spread was finally checked by the open land of King's College, a total of 493 houses had been destroyed - this was about a quarter of the city! No proof of blame has ever been placed for the fire, but its timely occurrence - just before the British occupied New York City for the seven year's duration of the Revolution - certainly raises suspicion of sabotage. General Washington, when he learned of the fire, remarked:<sup>39</sup>

*Providence, or some good honest fellow, has done more for us than we were disposed to do.*

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<sup>35</sup> Allen, pg. 72.

<sup>36</sup> Allen, pg. 72.

<sup>37</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 99.

<sup>38</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 100.

<sup>39</sup> Allen, pp. 72-73.



### ***The Tories Return to Manhattan***

General Howe quickly occupied New York City and set about converting it into British military headquarters for America. Soldiers were billeted in houses that had survived the fire, many of which had been abandoned by fleeing patriots. British sympathizers poured back into town, and were joined by Tories who came from other parts, now seeking refuge in the British-controlled city. By early 1777, the fire-ravaged town had repopulated to a level of 11,000, including several thousand soldiers and, by 1779, some 2,500 of their dependents.<sup>40</sup> New York City had become a garrison town, an island isolated from the rest of the country, whose livelihood depended on the British.

When Andrew and Mary Van Tuyl returned home, they would have found a city with a quarter of its houses burned, chronic shortages of food, and precious little firewood.<sup>41</sup> Trinity Church lay in ruins, martial law prevailed, and citizens - regardless of their political sympathies - faced harassment by the Redcoats. To endure in such an environment, one needed survival skills, which Andrew apparently possessed. Not only did he survive the war in occupied New York, but his family increased in size by four new children, all of them born in the City and baptized in Trinity Church parish.<sup>42</sup> It was probably during these war years, when virtually everything - including much of the food - had to be imported from England, that Andrew developed the English trading contacts which he would maintain after the war. He probably kept a low profile, did what he could to protect his family and property, and used his wits to survive and even prosper. Andrew emerged from the war with money to invest - more money than he would possibly have received as his share from selling the family farm.<sup>43</sup> This suggests the possibility that he in fact profited from wartime business dealings in the flourishing black market.

### ***Washington's Army on the Run***

After his defeats at Forts Mifflin and Red Bank, General Washington led his army on a desperate retreat southward, seeking refuge in Pennsylvania, on the western bank of the Delaware River. At this point, Washington's army had nearly disappeared. He was down to 3,000 men: by December of 1776 his revolution seemed ready to collapse.<sup>44</sup> The pursuing British Army, under Lord Cornwallis, included a corps of Hessians who decided to celebrate Christmas in their garrison at Trenton, New Jersey, just across the Delaware from Washington's fugitive army. In a desperate

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<sup>40</sup> Allen, pp. 73-74. By the war's end, New York City's population had risen to 30,000, many of whom were Loyalist refugees from other areas, seeking British protection.

<sup>41</sup> Allen, pg. 74. By the war's end, most of Manhattan's forests had been cut for firewood.

<sup>42</sup> Cramer, pg. 11.

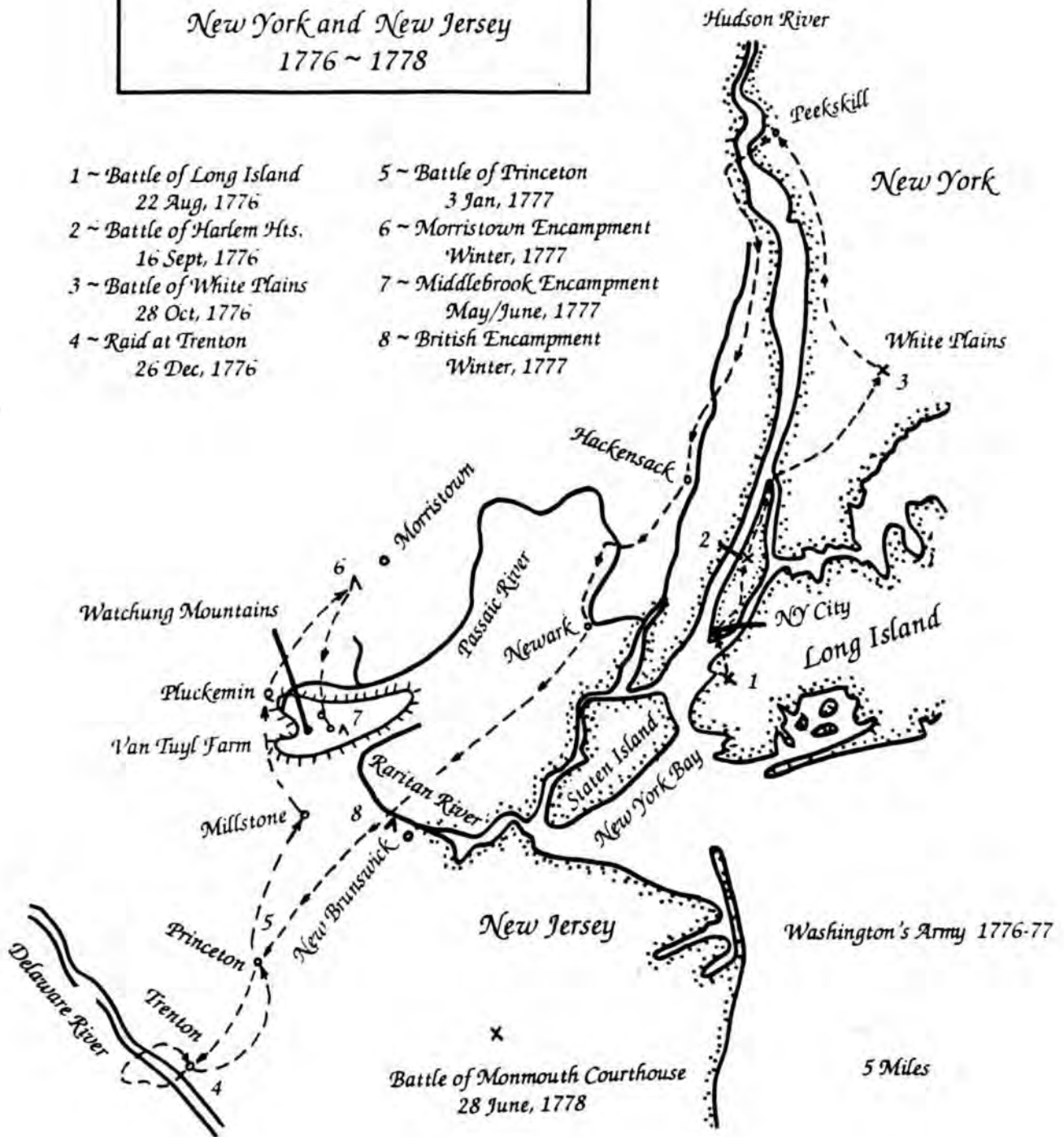
<sup>43</sup> New York Deeds, Liber 43, pp. 417-421. In this, the first recorded of many postwar property dealings, Andrew paid £1800 for a storehouse and dock near Burling Slip. His cousins had sold their 1/3 of the Staten Island farm in 1782 for £1190 [Richmond Co. Deeds, Liber E, pp. 307-308]. Andrew and his sister presumably spilt a similar amount on liquidation of their 1/3, though no record has been discovered.

<sup>44</sup> Millett, A., and Maslowski, P., "For the Common Defense, A Military History of the United States of America," Macmillan, New York, 1984, pg. 65.

*'Battles and Encampments  
of the American Revolution  
in  
New York and New Jersey  
1776 ~ 1778*

- 1 ~ Battle of Long Island  
22 Aug, 1776
- 2 ~ Battle of Harlem Hts.  
16 Sept, 1776
- 3 ~ Battle of White Plains  
28 Oct, 1776
- 4 ~ Raid at Trenton  
26 Dec, 1776

- 5 ~ Battle of Princeton  
3 Jan, 1777
- 6 ~ Morristown Encampment  
Winter, 1777
- 7 ~ Middlebrook Encampment  
May/June, 1777
- 8 ~ British Encampment  
Winter, 1777



act of guerrilla warfare, Washington secretly ferried his army across the river on Christmas night, 1776, surprised the Hessians in their slumbers, and captured or killed 1000 of them. Barely eluding Cornwallis, he headed northward, won a small battle with British reinforcements at Princeton, then fled north to a defensible camp at Morristown, New Jersey. The morale boost from these two small victories probably saved the Revolution from collapsing in the very year it had begun.<sup>45</sup>

### ***The Watchung Mountains***

Washington chose his winter encampment for two reasons: topography and politics. After the battle of Princeton on 3 January, 1777, he fled northward to Millstone, spent the next day marching through the Somerset hills to Pluckemin, and the following day continued north to Morristown, New Jersey.<sup>46</sup> By positioning his bedraggled army in Morristown, Washington had gained refuge from the British behind the nearly impassable *Watchung Mountains*, a forested group of rocky hills inhabited by country folk sympathetic to the Revolution.

The people living in these hills were a breed apart from the Tory New Yorkers. According to an account of the 1760s:<sup>47</sup>

*Somerset's land is rich and being settled by the industrious low Dutch and a few others. Much improved wheat is the staple of the county, of which they raise large quantities. They send their flour down the Raritan River to New York.*

The many streams tumbling down the slopes of the Watchung Mountains drove grist mills which ground the wheat, as well as sawmills which processed the timber that was a by-product of land clearing. Not all the land was good for farming. Such names as *Hardscrabble Road* accurately portrayed the true nature of the basaltic Watchung mountains.<sup>48</sup> Nor were all the settlers Dutch. The area had been purchased from the Indians in 1701 by the English proprietors of *East Jersey*, and after a period of disorganized "squatting" in the early part of the century, permanent settlement began by the 1720s.<sup>49</sup> John Annin, who settled here in 1722, was, like many others in the area, a Scottish Presbyterian.<sup>50</sup> Others, such as David Kirkpatrick, were Scots-Irish.<sup>51</sup> By the time of the Revolution, Somerset County's people - regardless of nationality - were strongly pro-independence. In fact, one of the most prominent landowners in the area was William Alexander

<sup>45</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th Edition, vol. 29, pg. 213.

<sup>46</sup> Clark, Havens, and Hoagland, "Somerset County 1688-1938: A Chronology," 1976, Rutgers University Library, Special Collections.

<sup>47</sup> Clark, et al., pg. 16.

<sup>48</sup> Today, nearly all the land has returned to suburban woods: very little farming remains. Basalt is quarried there today, and copper was mined from the Revolution through 1850 [Tomblin, pg. 37-8].

<sup>49</sup> Honeyman, A., ed., "A History of Somerset, Morris, Hunterdon, Warren and Sussex Counties," 1927, pg. 229.

<sup>50</sup> Clark et al., pg. 12.

<sup>51</sup> Tomblin, B., "Villages at the Crossroads, A History of Warren Township," 1976, Basking Ridge, NJ Library.

(called *Lord Stirling*) the staunch patriot who served as one of Washington's most effective generals, and who expended his personal fortune and his life in the revolutionary cause.<sup>52</sup>

After the winter of 1776-77, Washington had been able to reassemble some of his scattered troops, and was keen to renew the struggle against the British. His chief of logistics, General Nathaniel Greene, had picked the perfect spot from which to operate: an impregnable position on the first Watchung Mountain, between the west fork and east fork of Middle Brook - in an area later to be known as *Washington Valley* - just 8 miles from the British camp in New Brunswick.<sup>53</sup> So, on 28 May, 1777, General Washington and about 8400 of his troops descended on this rural spot - near present-day Martinsville - for what has come to be known as the *First Middlebrook Encampment*. To reach Washington's campground from the flat plains to the south - where the British were - you had to proceed north through a rocky canyon along Middle Brook, climb about 150 feet in elevation while crisscrossing the brook's west branch on a series of wooden bridges, until you came to a relatively flat road on the property line between Folkerd Sebring's and the Tunisons' farms. The army camped here, starting at the west branch and stretching out along the east branch of Middle Brook, all the way to Dock Watch Hollow.<sup>54</sup>

If you proceeded up the road about a mile-and-a-half, past the Bolmer's farm, you would climb another 200 feet through a gap in a second rank of hills - called the *Second Watchung Mountain* - to an isolated farm on the north side of the peak known as *Mt. Horeb*. Here, living with his wife Margaret and some of their grown and nearly-grown children, you would find old Abraham Van Tuyl.<sup>55</sup> Abraham Van Tuyl was the son of the twin Isaac Van Tuyl of New Dorp, Staten Island.<sup>56</sup> He had lived in these hills for many years, and was apparently doing all right for himself. His daughters had married the local farmers, and his three sons were running the farm.<sup>57</sup> Isaac Van Tuyl, old Abraham's eldest son, was in his mid-thirties, living with his wife Mary and their seven children on the Van Tuyl farm. Isaac was the second cousin of Andrew Van Tuyl of New York City, and though related, their lives and politics could not have been more different. He and 18-

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<sup>52</sup> Honeyman, pg. 230.

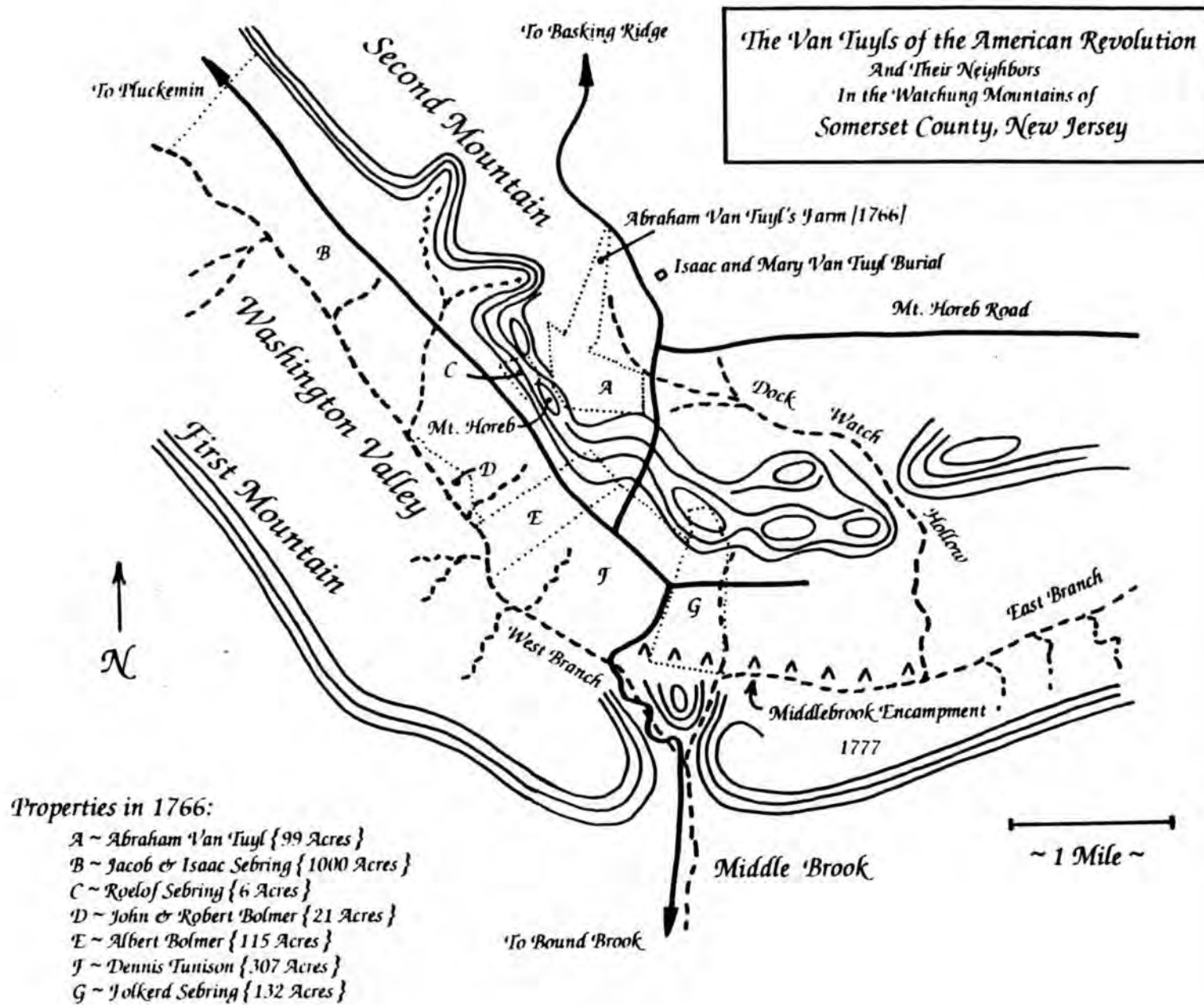
<sup>53</sup> Tomblin, pg. 39. Clark et al, pg. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Tomblin, pg. 39. Cites contemporary map of Robert Erskine.

<sup>55</sup> "Plan of Somerset County in the Province of New Jersey," copied from the original map based on the 1766 survey by Benjamin Morgan, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Abraham was a property owner here probably well before the 1766 survey. He was last mentioned as living on Staten Island in 1735 [Stillwell, J., "Historical Miscellany...", 1903, pg. 123], his oldest son was born in 1739, probably about, or just before, Abraham moved to Somerset County.

<sup>56</sup> Bowman, M., "The Descendants of Isaac Van Tuyl, Sr. and Mary McCarter," Gateway Press, Baltimore, 1970, pp. xix-xx. Abraham Van Tuyl would have been in his early 60s during the Revolution. Process of elimination verifies that he had to have been the Staten Island Abraham.

<sup>57</sup> Bowman, pp. xix-xx. Maria had married neighbor Folkerd Sebring, but had died in her 20s, and he had remarried. Sarah had married the other neighbor, Robert Bolmer. Elizabeth had married a David Grant and young Nellie had wed into the Harpending family. Annie would soon marry local farmer Oliver Goltry and Catherine would wed Benjamin Coon, also a local boy.



year-old son John were of military age, and they all joined the New Jersey militia near the beginning of the war.<sup>58,59</sup>

By the time Washington's army descended on their neighborhood, young John Van Tuyl had already seen active service, fighting a guerrilla war near Hackensack and Newark in November and December, 1776.<sup>60</sup> Their New Jersey Militia had ambushed the well-disciplined British as they marched southward along the roads in pursuit of the fleeing Washington:<sup>61</sup>

*...the British were at a loss how to meet this kind of warfare. To them it seemed unfair, counter to all the rules of the game. But gradually it dawned upon their leaders that ...[t]hey might conquer a province with a force of 5,000 men, but it would require 10,000 to hold it.*

The militia, though ill-disciplined, untrained, and often unreliable, was having a profound effect on the conduct of the war. The New Jersey Provincial Congress had authorized the state militia on 3 June, 1775, calling for one company of 80 men from each township. Men aged 16-50 who were physically capable were required to serve, and they were allowed to choose their own officers: one captain, two lieutenants, and one ensign. Each man was required to have:<sup>62</sup>

*...a good musket or firelock and bayonet, sword or tomahawk, a steel ramrod, worm and priming wire, and brush fitted thereto, a cartouche box to contain twenty-three rounds of cartridges, twelve flints, and a knapsack.*

Apparently, the standard length of service for a militia unit was one month, as we learn from the record of John Van Tuyl, who, in the winter of 1777 served for a month at Elizabethtown, and in April of 1777 was again called up for a month, this time to serve as a corporal under Capt. John Sebring, in support of General Benjamin Lincoln at Middlebrook.<sup>63</sup> Lincoln and 500 of his *Continental*s [Regular Army soldiers] were surprised by some 4000 British *Redcoats* at Bound Brook, in the plains at the base of the Watchung Mountains.<sup>64</sup> They escaped with few casualties, and were probably much in need of the temporary reinforcement provided by the local militia. Washington had sent some scouting parties, including Lincoln's, to watch the British, trying to divine their strategy. Fearing that General Howe would make his main move in New Jersey, Washington moved his whole force to the easily-defended Middlebrook Encampment on 28 May,

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<sup>58</sup> In U.S. Pension application W22483, John Van Tuyl details his own war record and mentions his father Isaac's service as Ensign in the Somerset Militia. Among others, Young John served under neighbors Capt. David Smalley of the 1st Battalion, Somerset Militia, Capt. John Sebring, Capt. Roelof Sebring, and his uncle and neighbor, Lt. Robert Bolmer.

<sup>59</sup> The tombstone of Isaac Van Tuyl identifies him as "Captain".

<sup>60</sup> John Van Tuyl Pension Application. Roelof Sebring was his captain, and Folkerd Sebring also served.

<sup>61</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 116.

<sup>62</sup> Tomblin, pg. 39.

<sup>63</sup> John Van Tuyl pension application.

<sup>64</sup> Clark, et al., pg. 19.

1777.<sup>65</sup> As if on cue, General Howe decided it was time to leave the pleasures of city life - including the company of his mistress, one Mrs. Loring - and on 9 June proceeded to Perth Amboy, NJ, to personally take command of the army. A cat-and-mouse game ensued, with Howe trying to lure Washington down from the hills where his experienced army could destroy the rebels. Washington did not oblige, and except for forays by Sullivan on 13 June and Lord Stirling on 23 June, nothing really happened. Howe, seeing no chance of success in New Jersey, returned his army to Staten Island and himself to the relative comfort of New York City.<sup>66</sup>

### ***The Campaigns of 1777***

The British mounted a two-pronged offense in 1777, sending General Burgoyne north and mounting an assault on Philadelphia by sea. Washington calculated that the existing continental forces in the north could handle Burgoyne, so he took his army south to fight for politically-important Philadelphia. By 25 September, Howe had defeated Washington and entered Philadelphia, causing the Continental Congress to flee. Defeated again on 4 October at Germantown, Washington withdrew to winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.<sup>67</sup>

However, the war in the north turned out differently. Howe had originally intended to support Burgoyne's campaign, but decided to launch his own Philadelphia campaign instead. Burgoyne, unsupported, met with stiff resistance in the north, and was eventually forced to surrender his entire army at Saratoga on 17 October. Strategically, this turned out to be the biggest blunder of the war for the British, because, as a result of Saratoga, France decided the Americans could win, and signed a Treaty of Alliance with them in February of 1778. The winter of 1777-78, then, found the British no closer to victory than when they'd started, and support for the war plummeted in England. Although the British held New York City, Newport, and Philadelphia, the militia controlled the countryside.<sup>68</sup>

The British needed to do something, and in 1778, they resolved on a new strategy and a new commander. They would henceforth concentrate their war on the southern colonies, where they hoped for more Tory support, and in the Caribbean, where the French were a severe threat. Their new commander was to be Sir Henry Clinton, and his first move would be removal of his army from the pointless occupation of Philadelphia back to New York City and Staten Island. By June, he was set to march north, and Washington was determined to oppose him.

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<sup>65</sup> "Inhabitants of Bridgewater Suffered to a Very Great Degreee," in *Somerset County Genealogical Quarterly*, v. 1, no. 1, March, 1983. pp 12-13. Also: Wertenbaker, pg. 128. Local tradition claims that the original 13-star *Stars and Stripes* flew for the first time over the first Middlebrook Encampment [Clark, et al., pg. 19.

<sup>66</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 128-130.

<sup>67</sup> Millet and Maslowski, pp. 66-67.

<sup>68</sup> Millet and Maslowski, pp. 67-68.

### ***The Battle of Monmouth Courthouse***

Word of Clinton's impending move must have been passed north, for by mid-June, 1778, the Somerset militia, led by Capt. John Sebring, Lts. Robert Bolmer and Wm. Lazier, and their Ensign, Isaac Van Tuyl, headed south to the Delaware to support General Washington, who was then ready to emerge from Valley Forge.<sup>69</sup> But Washington's officers were divided as to what course of action to take. Major General Charles Lee led the opposition to a full-scale assault on Clinton, whereas Lafayette, Hamilton, and Greene favored it. Washington decided to send an advance guard north, under Lafayette, to strike Clinton. Gen. Lee agreed at first, but wavered in his decision, finally reasserting his command on 28 June, just as Clinton was preparing to leave Monmouth Courthouse, *en route* to New York.<sup>70</sup>

The Van Tuyls and their Somerset County Militia had marched northward in pursuit of the British too, a move Sir Henry Clinton had actually invited:<sup>71</sup>

*I had also in view... to draw the enemy down from the hilly country, in the hope that an opportunity might offer of getting a fair stroke at him before I finally took my leave.*

But the militia tactics were, as usual, guerrilla tactics, and, as one Hessian officer put it: "*Each step cost human blood.*"<sup>72</sup> By the morning of 28 June, the Continentals and militia were in position to attack those British forces remaining in camp after the departure of the main force. General Charles Lee attempted to surround the small British contingent still encamped at the courthouse, but was surprised by the return of Clinton's rear guard, under Lord Cornwallis. Lee then made a fateful decision. Rather than fight it out with Cornwallis pending the arrival of Washington with the main body of the army, Lee ordered a retreat.<sup>73</sup> Washington, seeing retreating soldiers as he came forward, enquired as to what was going on. At first, he probably thought they were simply undisciplined militia retreating out of fear, but when he learned that Lee had ordered the pullback, he galloped forward to order a stand. Soldiers near him reported hearing the normally straight-laced Washington shouting "*Damn him*" when informed of Lee's action, and cursing Lee "*until the leaves shook on the trees.*"<sup>74</sup> His timely arrival stiffened resistance, and the Americans fought hard and well throughout the day - regulars and militia alike - in heatstroke-producing 80°F [27° C]

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<sup>69</sup> John Van Tuyl Pension Application.

<sup>70</sup> Commager, H., and Morris, R., "The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six," vol. 2, pg. 708.

<sup>71</sup> Clinton, Sir Henry, "A Historical Detail of Seven Year's Campaigns in North America from 1775 to 1782," in *The American Rebellion*, W.B. Willcox, ed., 1954, pg. 91.

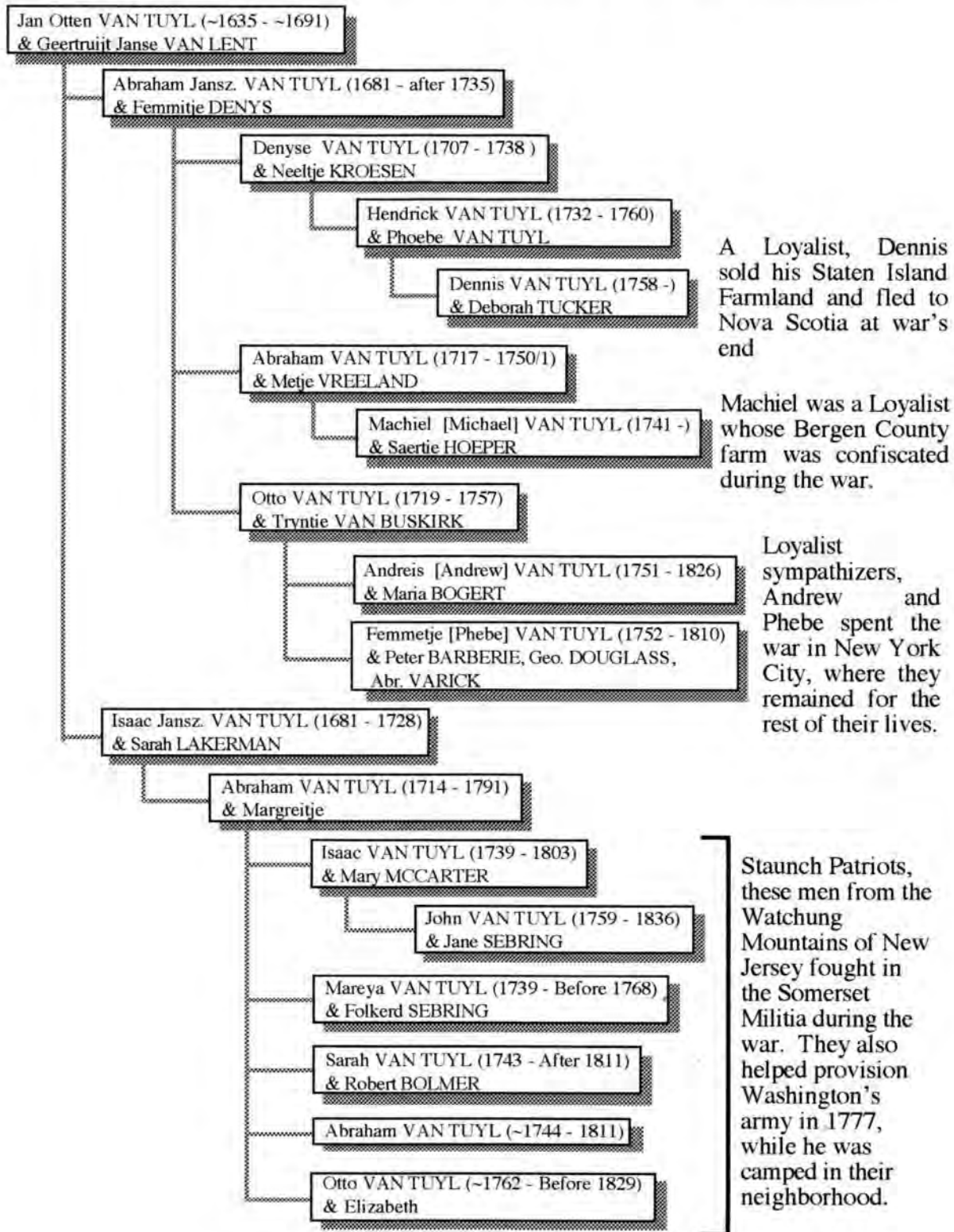
<sup>72</sup> Millet and Maslowski, pg. 69

<sup>73</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol. 8, pg. 261.

<sup>74</sup> Commager and Steele, pg. 714, 708. Lee was removed from command and court-martialed. He became an implacable enemy of Washington who politicked to have the general removed from command.



# Van Tuyls in the American Revolution



weather.<sup>75</sup> As soldiers fought continuously for five hours in the stifling heat, with dehydration as much an enemy as the British bullets, they were grateful to see the figure of Molly Hays - who they called *Molly Pitcher* - bringing pitcher after pitcher of life-sustaining water through the haze of battle. Legend has it that Molly's husband, John Hays, collapsed at his cannon, whereupon Molly took his place for the remainder of the battle.<sup>76</sup>

The battle ended at sundown in a stalemate. As Sir Henry Clinton put it:<sup>77</sup>

*The King's troops, after having rested on the field of action without further molestation from the enemy until near midnight, took advantage of the coolness of the night to escape the fatal effects of another day's sun, and resumed their march without being followed by a single man of the rebel army.*

Clinton was right, of course, but sometimes the legends of war are as important as the facts. On strictly technical grounds, the Americans could not really claim a victory at Monmouth. But on moral and psychological grounds they certainly did. To the simple militiamen and hardened Continentals, Clinton's tactically brilliant midnight maneuver was a cowardly retreat, and in this kind of war, the mind-set of the guerrillas is everything. Bit by bit, they were wearing down the British, and it would be only a matter of time until they would have to give up the overseas campaign. In February, their fate was sealed with the French declaration of alliance. By 1779, Spain declared war, and in 1780, so did the Dutch.<sup>78</sup> The British were in over their heads, and the deadly combination of persistent, omnipresent militia action and French naval power would eventually do them in. As it turned out, the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse would be the last major engagement between British and American armies in the Northern colonies.<sup>79</sup>

### ***The War at Middlebrook***

After their service at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, Isaac Van Tuyl and his soldier son John may have been joined in the later years of their war service by Isaac's youngest brother, Otto.<sup>80</sup> In 1780 and 1781, between plantings and harvests, the Van Tuyls again saw service under their local captain, John Sebring. In January of 1781, they mounted a commando raid against the British on Staten Island. Crossing over in the deadly cold winter, they braved snow and exposure to harass the Redcoats in their garrisons.<sup>81</sup> Militiamen like the Van Tuyls and their neighbors played the pivotal role in this war of revolution, which was decided not so much by generalship,

<sup>75</sup> Millett and Maslowski, pg. 69.

<sup>76</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th edition, vol. 9, pg. 474. Commager and Steele, pg. 714.

<sup>77</sup> Clinton, pg. 98.

<sup>78</sup> Millett and Maslowski, pg. 68.

<sup>79</sup> Millett and Maslowski, pg. 69.

<sup>80</sup> Cramer, pg. 28. [Cites "New Jersey in the Revolution, by Stryker, pg. 805]. Otto was probably 3 years younger than his nephew John.

<sup>81</sup> John Van Tuyl pension application. John suffered from exposure and had to be evacuated, but fully recovered after two months recuperation, to serve yet again in 1781. Isaac Van Tuyl may have been elected captain of his militia unit, if his 1803 tombstone inscription is to be believed.

but by attrition. As long as Washington kept some kind of force in the field, resistance would continue, driven by the volunteer service of farmers and tradesmen who risked all for the cause of self-determination.

But the Revolution was hard on the non-combatants as well. After the Middlebrook Encampment of 1777, a group of local residents were forced to petition the New Jersey Assembly for restitution, saying:<sup>82</sup>

*WE your humble Petitioners...in the months of May & June Last past suffered to a very great Degree our Winter & Summer Crops & our Meadows have been Pastured & Destroyd our fences are Burnt and our farms Laid waste...*

Those who lived around Middlebrook had not only to endure the 8000-man army's 1777 sojourn in their neighborhood, but also the *Second Middlebrook Encampment* of 1778-79. This time, Washington camped on the flatlands below the Watchung Mountains, but the burden of provisioning his army fell to the local farmers and their families. Washington realized that without the support of the populace, his cause was doomed, so he went to great lengths to discourage pilfering by his troops. Young John Coddington, the Van Tuyl's neighbor, went to visit General Washington during the Middlebrook Encampment to retrieve the family's cow, which had been taken by a foraging party of soldiers. Washington asked if the lad could recognize his cow, and being satisfied he could, allowed him to take the animal home.<sup>83</sup> A much sadder outcome attended the affair of five soldiers accused of pilfering from the populace during the second Middlebrook Encampment in 1779. Dr. James Thatcher, on duty at the time, wrote in his diary: <sup>84</sup>

*Five soldiers were conducted to the gallows, according to their sentence...While in this awful situation, trembling on the verge of eternity, three of them received a pardon from the commander-in-chief, who is always tenderly disposed to spare the lives of his soldiers. The two others were obliged to submit to their fate...*

### ***The Horrors of War***

The British, apparently feeling no need to win the "hearts and minds" of the Americans, abused even their Tory sympathizers. These Loyalists, who chafed under the military dictatorship that accompanied the war, went so far as to appeal to England, through Lord Carlisle, for relief. Their pleas were denied.<sup>85</sup> A notorious example of the military's misdeeds was the deforestation of the farms around New York City - farms owned by Loyalists. Owners were paid nothing for the wood, but the corrupt quartermasters of New York billed the crown for full value of the felled trees.<sup>86</sup> When the British seized the cattle, horses and wagons of the Long Island farmers in 1777

<sup>82</sup> *Somerset County Genealogical Quarterly*, v. 1, no. 1, March, 1983. Though the Van Tuyls did not sign this plea, their neighbors did. These included the Sebrings, Harpendings, Bolmers, and Goltrys - all families who were, or would become, related to the Van Tuyls by marriage.

<sup>83</sup> Tomblin, pg. 39.

<sup>84</sup> Clark et al., pg. 63.

<sup>85</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 151-155.

<sup>86</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 160-61.

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- again without compensation - rumors had it that the appropriations earmarked for compensating farmers found their way into the pockets of General Howe and his commissary officer.<sup>87</sup> The stark contrast between the images of the opposing commanders could not have been clearer in the minds of the colonists: Washington, who executed soldiers for pilfering; Howe, the war profiteer.<sup>88</sup>

But the truly most horrible aspect of the war was to be found in New York Harbor, in the form of the prison ships *Jersey* and *John*. Americans were incarcerated here under the most horrible conditions imaginable:

*...mere walking skeletons...scarcely clothes to cover their nakedness, and overrun with lice from head to foot.”<sup>89</sup>  
We bury 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 men a day...We have 200 more sick and falling sick every day...Our morning’s salutation is, “Rebels! turn out your dead!”<sup>90</sup>*

The British were actually quite successful at covering up these atrocities by conducting sham inspections, then reporting in their propaganda sheet - the *Royal Gazette* - that all was well.<sup>91</sup> The New York Loyalists never knew, and probably avoided learning, the truth about this barbarous aspect of the Revolution.

### **Peace At Last**

“I have almost ceased to hope,” wrote a dejected George Washington from his winter camp of 1780-81 in Morristown, NJ. His troops were in mutiny, and the country’s morale was at an all-time low.<sup>92</sup> Since the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, the war had shifted to the South, and Washington had played no part in those struggles, which were commanded - against his wishes - by a new army under Horatio Gates.<sup>93</sup> The demoralizing treason of Benedict Arnold had undermined the Revolution in the North, and prospects looked bleak, indeed.

But events were soon to turn Washington’s way. By the first week of July, 1781, he found himself encamped in Yonkers, NY, along with the Comte de Rochambeau and his 4000-man French Army (newly arrived from their landing at Newport, Rhode Island), poised for an invasion of New York City.<sup>94</sup> Altogether, they had amassed perhaps 11,000 troops for this endeavor, and

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<sup>87</sup> Allen, pg. 75.

<sup>88</sup> Of course, such stories may or may not be true. But the public relations effect they had must have been enormous. Only in New York City itself, where the British controlled the Press, was favorable publicity afforded their army.

<sup>89</sup> Wertenbaker, 166.

<sup>90</sup> Allen, pg. 76.

<sup>91</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 167. James Rivington, the paper’s editor, was a notorious propagandist for the British.

<sup>92</sup> Tuchman, B., “The First Salute,” New York, 1988, pp. 189-190.

<sup>93</sup> Millet and Maslowski, og. 70.

<sup>94</sup> Tuchman, pp. 245-246.

were awaiting news from Admiral de Grasse as to when he would arrive in New York Harbor.<sup>95</sup>

*It was at this moment that Rochambeau received a letter from de Grasse written at St. Francis, San Domingo, which altered the whole situation. It stated that the French fleet would sail on August 13, not for New York, but for the Chesapeake [bay], that he would bring twenty-nine warships and three regiments, 1,000 men strong each, 100 dragoons, 100 artillerymen, ten field pieces and several cannon, and that he would return to the West Indies on October 15.*

Given a narrow window of opportunity, at a place not of his choosing, Washington nevertheless had no choice: he had to go south. This he did, in a long march of some 500 miles. *“That this was carried out without fault seems accountable only by a series of miracles.”*<sup>96</sup> The New Jersey Militia was called out to fill the vacuum left by Washington’s hastily departing army. John Van Tuyl and Folkerd Sebring volunteered for this defensive posting, and were stationed at Connecticut Farms, NJ, for what would be John’s last, anticlimactic, service of the war.<sup>97</sup>

Washington and the French captured Cornwallis and his 7000-man army at Yorktown, Virginia, on 19 October. But to Washington, who wanted to follow up this victory by attacking Wilmington, Delaware and Charleston, South Carolina, the decisive character of his Yorktown victory was not fully apparent.<sup>98</sup> Admiral De Grasse’s departure made Washington’s plans impossible, and following the Yorktown victory, the war simply died out in America. The British focused their efforts on defending Jamaica from the French, and despite proclamations calling for vigorous prosecution of the war, the British had had enough.<sup>99</sup> On March 20, 1782, the Tory government fell in England, was replaced by the pro-peace Whigs, and by July 31 of that year, word arrived in New York that the King intended to grant unconditional independence to His former dominions in America.<sup>100</sup>

And so it was that peace descended on America, and panic struck New York City.

### ***The Exodus***

The only good news for the New York City Loyalists in 1781-82 was the announcement of Sir Henry Clinton’s replacement. Blame heaped upon Clinton from both sides of the Atlantic, with the words of Tory William Franklin perhaps summing it up:<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 237-239. Reportedly, the French were nervous about entering the treacherous waters of New York Bay and risking disaster with their deep-draft warships.

<sup>96</sup> Tuchman, pg. 245.

<sup>97</sup> John Van Tuyl pension application.

<sup>98</sup> Tuchman, pg. 292.

<sup>99</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 249.

<sup>100</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 251.

<sup>101</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 247. Wm. Franklin was the son of Benjamin Franklin and the president of the Associated Loyalists of America. He emigrated to England after the war.

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*The Commander in Chief is gallant to a proverb and possesses great military knowledge in the field, but is weak, irresolute, unsteady, vain, incapable of forming any plan himself, and too weak or rather too proud and conceited to follow that of another...*

The list of charges against Clinton went on and on, begging the question, "Could better command have saved the American Colonies for Great Britain?" Ironically, the very commander who might have preserved the American Colonies for Britain arrived just as the war was ending. He was Sir Guy Carleton, by all accounts an able and popular leader. When word arrived on 25 March of the preliminary peace treaty terms, it fell to Carleton to negotiate the details of the American takeover of New York.<sup>102</sup> In addition to evacuating British and German troops, Carleton was faced with the imperative need to transport some 60,000 Loyalists from New York City alone! These included not only New York residents, but also those refugees from other areas who had flocked to the Tory city at war's end.<sup>103</sup> Tories in outlying areas had been subject to brutal and humiliating treatment at the hands of the victorious revolutionaries. Many were "tarred and feathered" - or worse.<sup>104</sup> This post-revolutionary reign of terror drove people to seek refuge in the safest place they knew: New York City.

But not all those entering New York during the interregnum were Loyalists. Some 2000 or so former New Yorkers returned early in 1783 to try to reclaim their property, or to prevent it being carried off by evacuees. Among the property many of them wished to reclaim was their slaves. One of the supreme ironies of the American Revolution was the desire of the victors - those who decried the "*chains and slavery*" of British colonialism - to continue enslaving 20% of their population, and of the British colonial masters to promote freedom for the Negroes. The British had promised free status to many who were slaves when they took over, and Carleton directly opposed Washington's demand that the slaves be returned to their former owners.<sup>105</sup> Tories such as Andrew Van Tuyl who had stayed in New York throughout the war were still firmly in possession of their property - including slaves. Andrew was from a family which had owned slaves for several generations, and the slaves he owned in New York were to remain his property until 1811.<sup>106</sup>

Carleton's pressing problem was this: *What to do with the Loyalists?* Many had seen their property confiscated during the war, and many feared for their safety. The wealthier ones had fled to England, but most could not afford that option. Carleton offered land grants in New

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<sup>102</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 256. The formal signing of the *Treaty of Paris* was 3 Sept., 1783.

<sup>103</sup> Allen, pg. 78. It is estimated that *in toto*, upwards of 100,000 Loyalists fled.

<sup>104</sup> Wertenbaker, pp. 258 -260. An example of torture applied to a Loyalist was Joshua Booth of Goshen, NY. His head and eyebrows were shaved, then coated with tar and a layer of feathers. They hung a cowbell around his neck and a sign saying: "*Look ye Tory crew, and see what George your King can do.*"

<sup>105</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 258.

<sup>106</sup> New York Deeds, Liber 95, pp. 337-338, Sept. 20, 1811.

Brunswick or Nova Scotia for those who wished to evacuate to Canada.<sup>107</sup> The logistics of this exodus were overwhelming. All during the spring and summer of 1783, New York City teemed with activity. On 27 April, 7,000 set off, and on 13 June, another 3,000. In all, there were over 175 sailings in 5 months, with the final tally being some 30,000 Loyalists settled in Nova Scotia and St. John.<sup>108, 109</sup>

On 25 November, General George Washington entered New York City in triumph. Since fleeing the city in 1776, he had held the revolutionary army together through hardship and defeat, and had managed to retain the loyalty and even admiration of most people sympathetic to independence. In time, the greater significance of his accomplishment would become clear. But on that November day, his feelings were probably those of relief that he had survived mixed with pride that he had defeated his enemies, and a desire to return to the peaceful life of a country gentleman. We can only wonder what people who had survived wartime New York under British rule - people like Andrew Van Tuyl - were feeling.

### ***Epilogue***

The winners were hardly gracious in victory when it came to their treatment of Loyalists, or those suspected of aiding them. Loyalists were flogged, imprisoned, tarred and feathered and otherwise harassed by the victors.<sup>110</sup> Many were deprived of their property, and others merely intimidated by the possibility of facing persecution.

Among the displaced Loyalists were the following people associated with the Van Tuyl family:

- Oliver Barberie, fled to London; John Barberie, to St. John, New Brunswick.<sup>111</sup>
- Dennis Van Tuyl [b. 1758], fled to Nova Scotia.<sup>112</sup>
- Michael Van Tuyl [b. 1741], lost his farm: destination unknown.<sup>113</sup>
- Lawrence and Abraham Van Buskirk, fled to Nova Scotia.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Wertenbaker, pg. 261.

<sup>108</sup> Wertenbaker, 261-265.

<sup>109</sup> Gilroy, M., "Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia," Royal N.S. Hist. Soc., 1980, pg. 114. A sampling of Nova Scotia Land Grants shows 54% of the owners were white, 46% negro. Whites averaged 176 acres per grant, while blacks averaged 35 acres.

<sup>110</sup> Whitby, B. "The Nova Scotia Loyalists," in *Loyalists in Nova Scotia*, Lancelot Press, Hantsport, NS.

<sup>111</sup> "Family Record: Barberie," in *NYGBR*, Oct, 1992, pp. 207-209. Oliver was the uncle of Peter Barberie, first husband of Phebe Van Tuyl, and John was Peter's brother.

<sup>112</sup> Gilroy, Pg. 114. This Dennis was probably the son of Hendrick and Phoebe Van Tuyl of Staten Island who sold his inherited farm in 1782.

<sup>113</sup> *New Jersey Journal*, 11 July 1787, as quoted in: Wilson, T., "Notices from NJ Newspapers 1781-1790," v. 1, Hunterdon house, 1988, pg. 247. Michael had enlisted in the British Army at age 17.

<sup>114</sup> Eaton, A., "History of King's County, NS," 1972, pg. 852. Also, Antliff, W., "Loyalist Settlements 1783-1789," pg. 42, and Gilroy, pg. 114. Abraham Van Buskirk was a Captain in the *Queen's Orange Rangers*, a Loyalist militia unit. He went first to St. John, then to Nova Scotia, finally returning to Athens, NY. The Van Buskirks were from Bergen Co., NJ, part of the same family as Tryntje Van Buskirk, wife of Otto Van Tuyl, the ferryman of Staten Island.

But many of the minor Loyalists and British sympathizers, especially those in New York City, were able to escape persecution. If they were willing to live with the new regime (as many were) and stick to their homes and businesses in New York City, they were apparently tolerated by the incoming New Yorkers, many of them new immigrants.<sup>115</sup> Among those who stayed in New York City were Andrew Van Tuyl and his sister Phebe, now Mrs. George Douglass.<sup>116</sup> As time went on and bitter memories faded, they apparently were able to openly admit their Loyalist sympathies, for which they probably felt no need to apologize. But some New Yorkers undoubtedly never forgave them for being on the “wrong” side of the Revolution.

As for the Somerset County militiamen, they seem to have simply carried on with their farmer’s lives, no doubt happy not to have to endure armies camping in their neighborhood. The descendants of Abraham Van Tuyl on the Second Watchung Mountain needed more land as time went on, and they may have obtained it from acreage that had been confiscated from absentee landlords DeLancey and Cuyler, who had owned property surrounding Abraham’s farm.<sup>117,118</sup> His war service apparently was a lifelong source of pride to Isaac Van Tuyl of the Second Watchung Mountain, who had fought beside his sons in the cause of Liberty. His epitaph, carved in the sturdy brown stone of the Watchung Mountains, endures to this day, proclaiming his pride at having served as an elected officer of the Revolution in the Somerset Militia:<sup>119</sup>

*In memory of Isaac  
Vantuyl Capt<sup>t</sup> who  
died Febr<sup>y</sup> 3<sup>d</sup> 1803  
in the 64<sup>th</sup> year of  
his age*

<sup>115</sup> Allen, pp. 81-82. New York’s population increased from a wartime low of 10,000 to 23,614 just 4 years after the war, largely due to immigration.

<sup>116</sup> “Family Record: Barberie,” in *NYGBR*, Oct, 1992, pp. 207-209. Widowed in 1779, Phebe remarried in New York City on 14 June, 1781.

<sup>117</sup> Tomblin, pg. 2. These New York City speculators owned 3000 acres which was appropriated by the State of New Jersey in 1788.

<sup>118</sup> “Plan of Somerset County in the Province of New Jersey,” *copied from the original map based on the 1766 survey by Benjamin Morgan*, Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

<sup>119</sup> Isaac Van Tuyl’s tombstone, and that of his wife, Mary McCarter, stand today in a small family graveyard several hundred yards west of the Mt. Horeb Church, near Martinsville, NJ. The title “Captain” was probably a postwar honorarium.