

# Delaware in the American Revolution



An Exhibition from the  
Library and Museum Collections of  
The Society of the Cincinnati

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1783

Anderson House  
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**T**HIS catalogue has been produced in conjunction with the exhibition, *Delaware in the American Revolution*, on display from October 12, 2002, to May 3, 2003, at Anderson House, Headquarters, Library and Museum of the Society of the Cincinnati, 2118 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D. C. 20008. It is the sixth in a series of exhibitions focusing on the contributions to the American Revolution made by the original 13 states and the French alliance.

Generous support for this exhibition was provided by the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati.

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Text by Ellen McCallister Clark and Emily L. Schulz.

Front cover: Domenick D'Andrea. "The Delaware Regiment at the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776." [detail] Courtesy of the National Guard Bureau. See page 11.

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**T**he season loudly calls for the greatest efforts of every friend to his Country.

— George Washington, Wilmington, to Caesar Rodney,  
August 31, 1777, calling for the assistance of the  
Delaware militia in rebuffing the British advance to Philadelphia.

*Collections of the Historical Society of Delaware*





Detail of "A Chorographical Map...." [1778]. See page 8.

## INTRODUCTION

The small state of Delaware made large contributions to the achievement of American independence. Although officially part of Pennsylvania during the colonial period, the "Lower Counties" of New Castle, Kent and Sussex retained a separate identity and, after 1704, their own governing assembly. The outbreak of war with Great Britain prompted Delaware's formal separation as a sovereign state. On June 15, 1776, the Assembly of the Lower Counties called for the formation of a new government "for the safety, protection and happiness" of its citizens. The following month, Delaware's delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia joined the other states in voting for the Declaration of Independence.

The First Delaware Regiment was organized at the request of Congress in January 1776. Known for their distinguished uniforms, the "Delaware Blues" served with great distinction in nearly every major campaign in the middle states and the south, and were widely admired for their bravery and military skill. On the home front, Delawareans experienced the war firsthand during the Philadelphia campaign of 1777, when British troops crossed through the northern part of the state and occupied the city of Wilmington. The Battle of Cooch's Bridge was fought near Newark as American light infantry tried to delay the British advance through the state.

As the war drew to a close, officers of the Continental Army established the Society of the Cincinnati to celebrate the achievement of national independence and to perpetuate their bonds of friendship. The officers of the Delaware line organized the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati on July 4, 1783, becoming the sixth of the Society's constituent branches. Drawing from the collections of the Society of the Cincinnati and members of the Delaware Society, this exhibition commemorates the valor and sacrifices of the citizen-soldiers of Delaware during the American Revolution. It was made possible through the generous support of their descendants who continue in the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati.





Engraving by Noble, 1783. See page 7.

## LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE, 1776

In 1776, Delaware's population of roughly 37,000 made it second only to Georgia as the smallest of the 13 original states. The varied inhabitants of these rural counties south of Philadelphia reveal the area's notable diversity. While many of Delaware's residents claimed an English background, Swedish, Dutch, and German settlers also inhabited the region.

Through the critical decades prior to the American Revolution, Delaware remained divided on issues concerning independence. Delaware's leading politicians joined the other colonies in outrage over the British taxes and restrictions passed in the 1760s, and they established local Committees of Correspondence in 1774, but they lagged behind their New England counterparts in their enthusiasm for a complete separation from Great Britain. Widespread popular loyalism existed, especially in the southern counties of Kent and Sussex, because of the region's rural and isolated nature, its proximity to British ships in the Delaware Bay, and the strong presence of the Church of England. But whether patriot or loyalist, Delawareans in general were a moderate group.

The year 1776 became a political and emotional turning point in the fight for American independence. Though it approached this crisis with a caution that was characteristic of its political attitudes, Delaware came to support the Declaration of Independence and the patriot cause with the same zeal as the more radical colonies.

**Three Delaware Bills of Credit, issued January 1, 1776. Printed by James Adams. Signed by John McKinly, Thomas Collins, Boaz Manlove, and James Sykes.**

Gift of Col. J. F. Reynolds Scott, Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati, 1951

These three bills, dated January 1, 1776, reflect Delaware's reluctant attitude towards the prospect of independence. The 1776 issue marks the first that the Assembly in Delaware



approved without authorization from the Crown, but the notes still displayed the King's coat of arms and were dated from the beginning of George III's reign. James Adams of Wilmington printed these bills from a combination of hand-engraved copper plates and ready-made lead casts. In order to deter potential counterfeiters, bills displayed intricate fonts and scrolls and a reminder on the back that counterfeiting carried the death penalty. As was customary throughout the colonies, commissioners appointed by the Delaware Assembly numbered and signed each note. In 1776, these men included John McKinly and Thomas Collins, both future presidents of the Delaware State, and eventual loyalist Boaz Manlove. James Sykes, whose signature can be seen on the four-shilling note, replaced Manlove when the Tory was forced to flee to the British. Though the value of Delaware currency remained relatively stable, the dismal state of the new nation's finances drove Delaware to revoke the legal status of its state bills in 1781 in order to support the struggling Continental currency.

Caesar Rodney (1728-1784), Philadelphia, to Thomas Rodney, July 4, 1776. A.L.S. [facsimile reproduction]

Courtesy of the Albert H. Small Declaration of Independence Collection, Accession #12140, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia

Samuel Sartain (1830-1906), engraver, after Thomas Sully. "George Read." [n.d.]

Private collection

Cornelius Tiebout (1777-1830), engraver. "Thomas McKean, Governor of Pennsylvania." Philadelphia: Published by D. Kennedy, n.d.

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

As Delaware's delegates to the Second Continental Congress in 1776, George Read, Thomas McKean, and Caesar Rodney embodied Delaware's careful approach to the colonial crisis. Read cautiously opposed independence because he doubted the colonies' readiness for war. On the other hand, McKean and Rodney adamantly supported separation from Great Britain. On the eve of the vote in Congress on American independence, Rodney's duties as Speaker of the Delaware Assembly kept him in Dover while McKean and Read remained split on the resolution. McKean sent an urgent letter to Rodney that night summoning him to Philadelphia immediately to break the tie. "Tho detained by thunder and rain," Rodney arrived in Philadelphia on July 2, 1776, just in time to cast his vote for independence. This inspired Read to change his mind, and all three Delawareans joined the other delegates in signing the Declaration of Independence. Two days later, Rodney wrote this letter to his brother, one of only a few letters written on July 4, 1776, by signers of the Declaration.

All three delegates returned to Delaware to lead their state through the Revolution, each serving as president of the Delaware State. They also each represented Delaware in the United States Senate. Additionally, Rodney attained the rank of major general in command of the Delaware militia, Read



signed the United States Constitution and served as Delaware's chief justice (1793-98), and McKean became Pennsylvania's chief justice (1777-99) and then its governor (1799-1808). The State Society of the Cincinnati of Pennsylvania elected McKean an honorary member in 1783.

Chilad. July the 4th 1776

Sir I have inclosed you a summons directed to the Sheriff to ~~call~~ summon the members for our Com by to meet in Assembly at New Castle on the 22<sup>d</sup> day of this Instant. which I hope you will have put into his hands as soon as possible after it comes to yours - I arrived in Congress the detem<sup>d</sup> by Thunder and Rain / time enough to giving my Voice in the matter of Independence - It is ~~now~~ determined by the Thirteen United Colonies with out even one dissenting Colony - We have now got through with the whole of the Declaration and ordered it to be printed. so that you will soon have the pleasure of seeing it - Hand-bills of it will be printed. and sent to the Armies. Cities, County Towns &c. - To be published or rather proclaimed in form - - Don't neglect to attend closely and carefully to my Request and you'll oblige

Yours truly  
Caesar Rodney

Letter written by Caesar Rodney, July 4, 1776. See page 5.

Noble, engraver, after Hamilton. "The Manner in which the American Colonies Declared themselves Independant of the King of England, throughout the different Provinces, on July 4, 1776." London: Printed for the author, and pub. by A. Hogg, 1783. [See illustration page 2.]

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

One of the first Fourth of July celebrations in Delaware took place in New Castle when Second Lieutenant Enoch Anderson's company removed all royal insignia from the courthouse and burned them in the square. Two weeks later, Colonel John Haslet's Delaware Regiment celebrated in Lewes with a reading of the Declaration of Independence, three cannon blasts, and three toasts. In Dover, Kent County officials threw an image of George III into a bonfire with this exclamation: "Compelled by strong necessity thus we destroy even the shadow of that king who refused to reign over a free people." At the end of the month, nearly 500 cheering patriots in New Castle witnessed a reading of the Declaration and a bonfire fueled by the King's arms. This fervor also sparked a period of outward hostility towards non-patriots that was unusual in revolutionary Delaware.

Society of Friends, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. "An Epistle from our Yearly-Meeting, Held in Philadelphia, for Pennsylvania, New-Jersey, and the Western Parts of Maryland and Virginia, by Adjournments, from the 21<sup>st</sup> Day of the Ninth Month, to the 28<sup>th</sup> of the same, inclusive, 1776." Philadelphia, 1776. Signed by James Pemberton, Clerk.

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

The small minority of Quakers in Delaware adhered to strict rules for moral and spiritual living that, by the start of the Revolution, appeared out of fashion to most colonists. To reinforce their commitment to peace and generosity, Quaker ministers instructed their brethren to avoid participating in anything that might contribute to the war, such as political service and the circulation of paper money. John Cowgill, a Quaker from central Delaware, refused Continental currency on this principle and was ostracized from the town, arrested, and

paraded through the streets with a sign on his back declaring, “On the circulation of the Continental currency depends the fate of America.”

At the fall 1776 yearly meeting, these Quaker leaders, including ministers from Delaware, addressed the challenges that the American Revolution posed to the Society of Friends. In this Epistle addressed to fellow Quakers, ministers reiterate their hatred of war and express their “sincere desires for the prosperity of Truth, and the supporting and maintaining our Christian peaceable Testimony amidst the confusions which now prevail.” This somber religious document filled with prayers and biblical passages reveals the quiet alarm that weighed heavy on Quaker minds in 1776.

**H. Klockhoff, engraver, after Bernard Romans (ca. 1720-ca. 1784). “A Chorographical Map, of the Country, round Philadelphia | Carte Particuliere, des Environs de Philadelphie.” Amsterdam: Chéz Covens et Mortier, et Covens, junior, [1778?]. [See illustration opposite page 1.]**

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

**P**roduced for the European market, this map shows the northern two counties of “Delaware State” along with the surrounding region. It includes “Genl. Howe’s Track” from the Elk River in Maryland to Philadelphia, Iron Hill near the site of the Battle of Cooch’s Bridge, and the “Grand American Winter Camp” at Valley Forge.

Born in the Netherlands, Bernard Romans learned map-making and engineering in England. He worked as a surveyor for the British in the southern American colonies before the Revolution began. When war broke out in 1775, Romans was in Boston where Paul Revere was engraving his maps of Florida. Romans became an American patriot and accompanied the army through New York in 1777 until captured by the British and sent to England for the remainder of the war.

## THE DELAWARE CONTINENTALS

**O**n December 9, 1775, the Continental Congress resolved that in addition to the four “battalions” already ordered to be raised in Pennsylvania, the Lower Counties on the Delaware were to establish a Continental regiment of their own. The following month, the Delaware Council of Safety appointed John Haslet colonel in command of the new force. A former militia officer and early advocate of the patriot cause, the Irish-born Haslet inspired loyalty and excellence among his recruits. By April the regiment was nearly at full strength, with six companies stationed in Dover and two in Lewes.

Preparing to defend New York from British attack, Congress summoned Haslet’s regiment to Philadelphia in late July 1776. Assigned to Stirling’s Brigade within the main army, the Delaware line fought with notable resolution and bravery at the Battle of Long Island. They remained with the army through the subsequent retreat from New York, performing with particular distinction during the Battle of White Plains.

Haslet’s regiment was one of the last units to cross the Delaware River with Washington for the surprise attack at Trenton, New Jersey, on Christmas night 1776. With their terms of enlistment about to expire, the majority of officers and soldiers marched home to Delaware following the victory. Haslet stayed on with the army and was killed during opening action at the Battle of Princeton in early January 1777.

Following Haslet’s death, the Delaware Regiment was reorganized under the command of Colonel David Hall. Although never at full strength in number, the Delaware Continentals went on to render critical service through the bloody campaigns in Pennsylvania and New Jersey before moving on to even greater glory in the South.

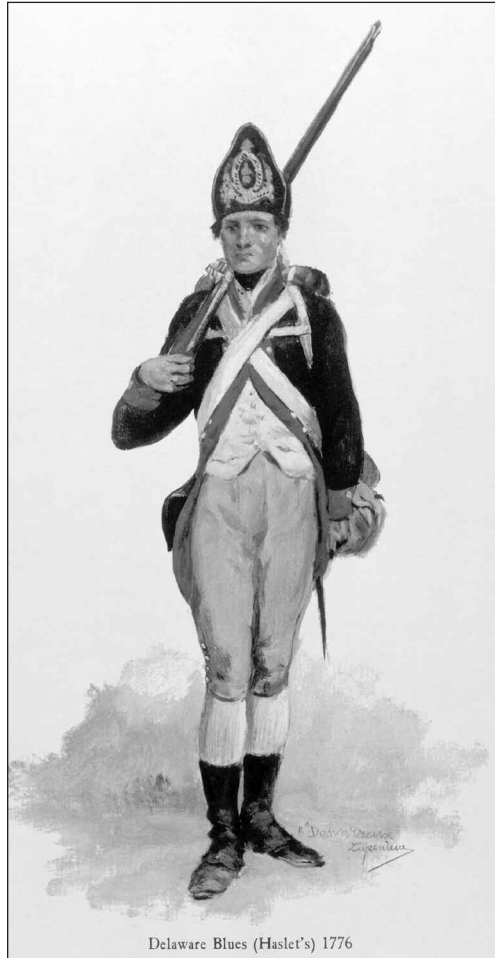


**“Delaware Blues 1776.” Porcelain figure, n.d.**

Private collection

Charles M. Lefferts, a leading authority on the military uniforms of the American Revolution, described the First Delaware Regiment as “the best uniformed and equipped in the army of 1776.” Their uniform was “a short blue jacket, faced and lined with red; a white waistcoat and buckskin breeches; white knit stocking with short black canvas gaiters or spatter-dashes. The buttons were of pewter for the men, and gilt for the officers, marked ‘DB’ for ‘Delaware Battalion’.”

When sufficient arms could not be supplied by the state, Congress ordered “as many of the arms lately imported as will be necessary to arm them completely” after the Delaware Regiment arrived in Philadelphia in August 1776. A Hessian officer who saw Stirling’s Brigade at Long Island later that month remarked that “they were fine, tall-looking fellows, and had extremely good English guns and bayonets.”



**R. Desvarreau Larpenteur. “Delaware Blues (Haslet’s) 1776.” [n.d.]**

**Domenick D’Andrea. “The Delaware Regiment at the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776.” Oil on canvas, 2002. [cover illustration]**

Collection of the National Guard Bureau

**Samuel Lewis. “A Plan of New York Island, part of Long Island &c. shewing the Position of the American and British Armies before, at, and after the Engagement on the Heights, August 27, 1776.” Philadelphia, 1807.**

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

During the Battle of Long Island, Stirling’s Brigade of Delaware and Maryland troops was positioned to the right of Washington’s line to defend the most direct route to the American fortifications at Brooklyn Heights. Through a brutal attack led by British General James Grant, Stirling’s Brigade held their ground, enabling the rest of the American army to withdraw. As British reinforcements moved in and surrounded his men, Stirling surrendered his sword and was taken prisoner. Led by Major Thomas Macdonough, most of the Delaware troops escaped though the Gowanus swamp, taking with them 23 prisoners.

The Delaware commander Colonel Haslet had court martial duties in New York and was not present at his regiment’s first battle. With evident pride, he described the performance of his men in a letter to Thomas Rodney on October 4, 1776:

*The Delawares and Marylanders stood firm to the last; and after a variety of skirmishing the Delawares drew up on the side of a hill, and stood upwards of four hours, with a firm determined countenance, in close array, their colours flying, the enemy’s artillery playing on them all the while, not daring to advance and attack them though six times their number, and nearly surrounding them.*

Smoltz. "Mercer, Mortally Wounded at Princeton." Philadelphia: J.M. Butler, n.d.

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Encouraged by the American army's success at Trenton and facing the expiring enlistments of his men at the end of 1776, Haslet sent several of his officers home to Delaware to raise new troops. He remained with the army, becoming an aide to General Hugh Mercer. Haslet was at Mercer's side on January 3, 1777, when the general was mortally wounded during the Battle of Princeton. As he attempted to rally Mercer's men, Haslet was struck in the head by a bullet and died instantly.

## THE BRITISH INVASION OF DELAWARE

In 1777, following the setbacks suffered at Trenton and Princeton, British Commander-in-Chief General William Howe set his sights on capturing the American capital city of Philadelphia. Choosing a water route that confused his opponents, Howe set sail from Staten Island on June 23 with 15,000 troops on 260 ships. The journey was longer and more arduous than expected, so it was not until August 25 that the ships reached their destination at the head of the Chesapeake Bay. Disembarking on a peninsula known as Elk Neck in Maryland, just a few miles from the Delaware border, Howe's sea-weary men set up camp and began to forage for provisions and livestock to replenish what had been lost at sea.

On the same day the British landed in Maryland, General Washington took up headquarters in Wilmington, Delaware, to block their advance to Philadelphia. On August 27, he established a new light infantry unit of highly skilled marksmen drawn from several infantry companies and placed them under the command of General William Maxwell. The Americans watched and waited as heavy rains kept the British from moving out. Finally, on September 2, British and Hessian troops under Howe's command marched into New Castle County, Delaware, and spread out in several directions, fueling speculation that they intended to "extend themselves in a line from Bay to Bay."

Stanley M. Arthurs (1877-1950). "The British Landing at the Head of Elk, August 25, 1777." [photographic reproduction]

Private collection

Upon hearing of the British landing, Washington assembled a reconnaissance party that included Generals Lafayette and Nathanael Greene and rode out from Wilmington to observe the enemy camp. The Americans' presence at the top of Iron Hill was noted by one of Howe's aides, Captain Friedrich von Muenchhausen, who wrote in his diary on August 26:



We observed some officers on a wooded hill opposite us, all of them either in blue and white or blue and red, though one was dressed unobtrusively in a plain grey coat. The Gentlemen observed us with their glasses as carefully as we observed them. Those of our officers who know Washington well, maintained that the man in the plain coat was Washington. The hills from which they were viewing us seemed to be alive with troops.

Sir William Howe, K.B. (1729-1814). "Declaration." August 27, 1777. [broadside]

Private collection

Following the landing of his troops at Head of Elk, General Howe issued this broadside to assure "the peaceable Inhabitants of the Province of Pennsylvania, the Lower Counties on Delaware and the counties of Maryland, on the Eastern Shore" that he had issued "strictest Orders to the Troops for the Preservation of Regularity and good Discipline, and [had] signified that the most exemplary Punishment shall be inflicted upon Those who shall dare to plunder the Property, or molest the Persons of any of His Majesty's well-disposed Subjects." In addition to pledging security and protection to the local Loyalist population, Howe further promised a "free and general Pardon" for any "Officers and private men, now actually in Arms against his Majesty" who "shall voluntarily come and surrender themselves to any Detachment of His Majesty's forces."

Four days after it was issued, George Washington forwarded a copy of Howe's proclamation to Congress, calling it "another Effort to seduce the people to give up their rights, and to encourage our soldiery to desert."

By His EXCELLENCY  
SIR WILLIAM HOWE, K.B.  
General and Commander in Chief, &c. &c. &c.

## DECLARATION.

SIR WILLIAM HOWE, regretting the Calamities to which many of His MAJESTY's faithful Subjects are still exposed by the Continuance of the Rebellion, and no less desirous of protecting the Innocent, than determined to pursue with the Rigors of War all those whom His MAJESTY's Forces, in the Course of their Progress, may find in Arms against the King, doth hereby assure the peaceable Inhabitants of the Province of PENNSYLVANIA, the Lower Counties on DELAWARE, and the Counties of MARYLAND, on the Eastern Shore of CHESAPEAKE-BAY, that in Order to remove any groundless Apprehensions which may have been raised of their Suffering by Depredations of the Army under His Command, he hath issued the strictest Orders to the Troops for the Preservation of Regularity and good Discipline, and has signified that the most exemplary Punishment shall be inflicted upon Those who shall dare to plunder the Property, or molest the Persons of any of His MAJESTY's well-disposed Subjects.

Security and Protection are likewise extended to all Persons, Inhabitants of the Province and Counties aforesaid, who, not guilty of having assumed legislative or judicial Authority, may have acted illegally in subordinate Stations, and, conscious of their Misconduct, been induced to leave their Dwellings, provided such Persons do forthwith return, and remain peaceably at their usual Places of Abode.

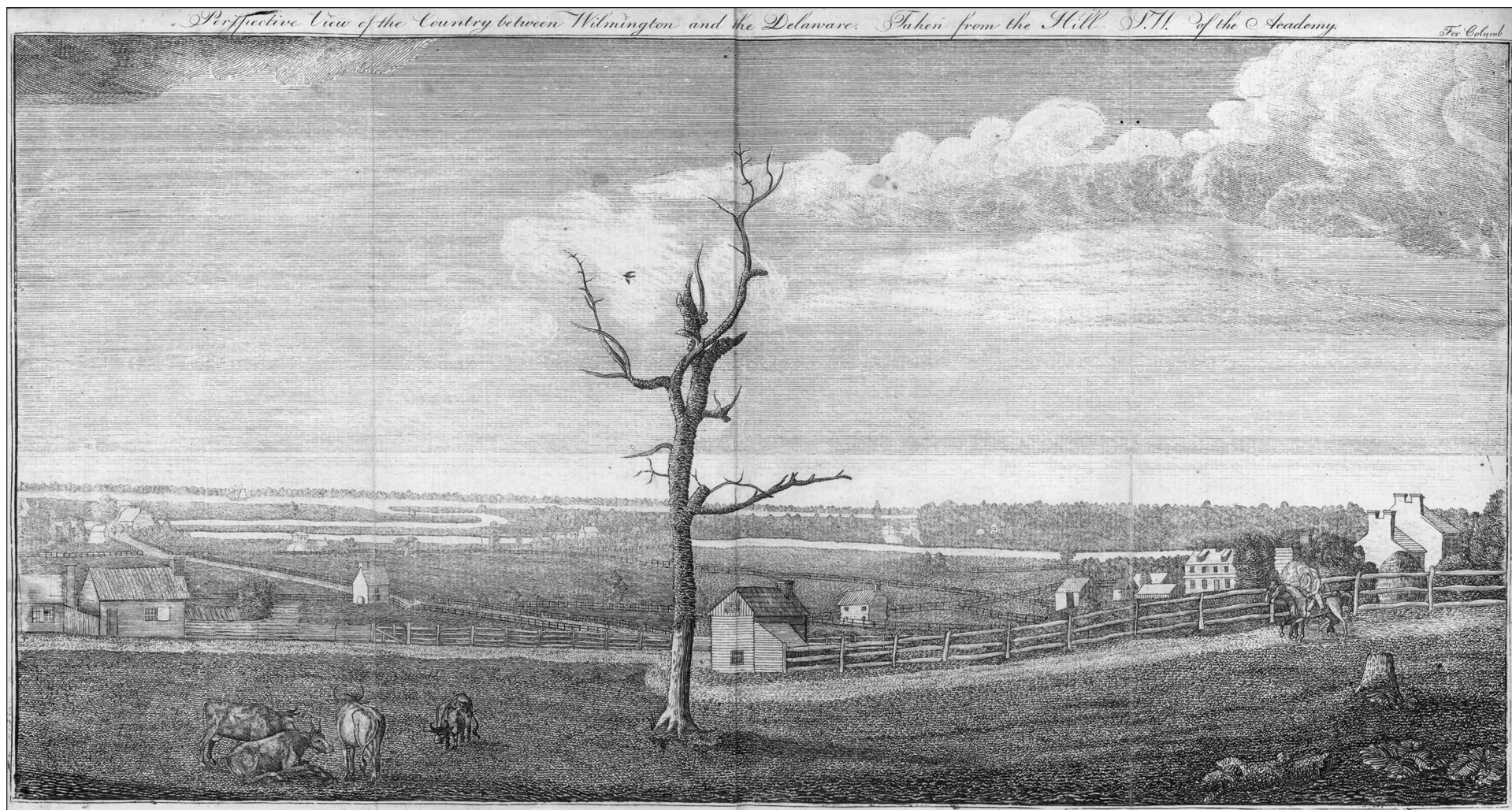
Considering moreover, that many Officers and private Men, now actually in Arms against His MAJESTY, may be willing to relinquish the Part they have taken in this Rebellion, and return to their due Allegiance: SIR WILLIAM HOWE doth therefore promise a free and general Pardon to all such Officers and private Men, as shall voluntarily come and surrender themselves to any Detachment of His MAJESTY's Forces, before the Day on which it shall be notified that the said Indulgence is to be discontinued.

GIVEN under my HAND, at Head-Quarters of the Army, the  
27th Day of August, 1777.

W. HOWE.

By His EXCELLENCY's Command,  
ROBERT MACKENZIE, Sec'y





“Perspective View of the Country between Wilmington and the Delaware. Taken from the Hill S.W. of the Academy.” See page 18.



“Perspective View of the Country between Wilmington and the Delaware. Taken from the Hill S.W. of the Academy.” Published in *The Columbian Magazine, or Monthly Miscellany, for April 1787* (Philadelphia: Printed for Seddon, Spotswood, Cist, and Trenchard, 1787). [See illustration on pages 16-17.]

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Despite General Howe’s order against plundering, the British and Hessian troops raided farms and gathered hundreds of sheep, cattle, and horses as they swept through the Delaware countryside. Following their victory at Brandywine, British troops returned to take advantage of the amenities of Delaware’s largest city. On September 12, the 71st Regiment, Fraser’s Highlanders, marched into Wilmington, arrested State President John McKinly, and imprisoned him aboard a British warship anchored in the Delaware River. The following day a detachment of Hessians arrived with the British sick and wounded, for whom makeshift infirmaries were set up. Although the British erected fortifications in and around the town and took over the homes of private citizens, the month-long occupation of Wilmington was relatively peaceful.

## THE BATTLE OF COOCH’S BRIDGE

The only Revolutionary War battle fought on Delaware soil took place at the site of Cooch’s Bridge near Newark. On the morning of September 3, 1777, British and Hessian troops marching east through Delaware under the command of General Cornwallis encountered General William Maxwell’s special corps of light infantry about a mile north of Aiken’s Tavern. Under Washington’s orders to “give every possible annoyance” to the enemy, Maxwell’s corps of 800 marksmen fired from the cover of the woods and ravines along the road to Cooch’s Bridge. At the forefront of the British line was Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Von Wurmb’s elite force of German jägers who responded with cannon-fire and a bayonet charge, ultimately forcing the Americans to withdraw. The running fight ended in a final skirmish in the vicinity of the Welsh Tract Baptist Church. As the day ended, Maxwell’s corps retreated four miles north to rejoin the main American army on White Clay Creek.

The Battle of Cooch’s Bridge was the first engagement of the Philadelphia campaign of 1777. A prelude to the more devastating defeat at Brandywine Creek a week later, the events at Cooch’s Bridge nevertheless demonstrated a tenacity that would eventually lead the Americans to victory.

John André (1751-1780). “Progress of the British Army from the landing in Elk River to the taking possession of Philadelphia anno 1777.” Manuscript map reproduced in *André’s Journal: An Authentic Record of the Movements and Engagements of the British Army in America from June 1777 to November 1778 as Recorded from Day to Day by Major John André* (Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1903).

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

Captain John André, one of the British participants in the battle, recorded the events of September 3 in his journal: “[The Rebels] disposed of themselves amongst some trees by the roadside and gave a heavy fire as our Troops advanced, but upon

being pressed, ran away and were pursued above two miles.” The accompanying map shows the British presence in the area of Iron Hill and Cooch’s Bridge from the “3d to the 8th of Sept.” Crossed swords indicate the place where “Advanced Corps Under Maxwell [were] defeated.”

An aide to General Charles Grey during the Philadelphia campaign, André later attained legendary status following his capture and execution as a spy associated with Benedict Arnold’s betrayal at West Point in 1780.

#### **Cannon ball found on the Cooch property.**

Private collection

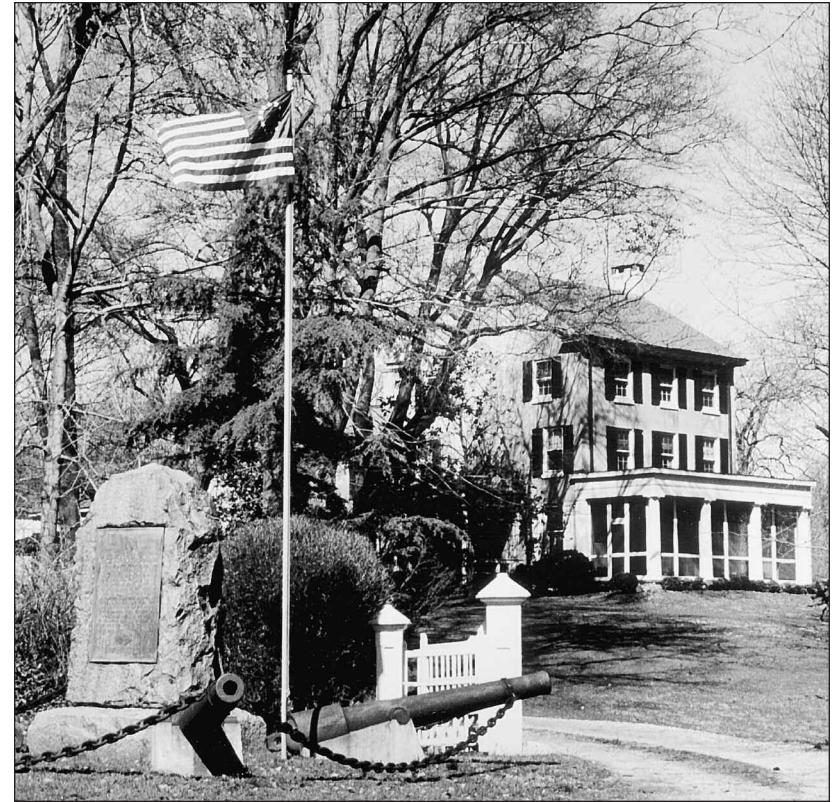
**I**n addition to superior numbers, the British held the advantage with cannon fire. On the evening of September 3, General Washington reported to Congress:

*This Morning the Enemy came out with considerable force and three pieces of Artillery, against our Light advance Corps, and after some pretty smart skirmishing obliged them to retreat, being far inferior in number and without Cannon....The design of their movement...seems to have been to disperse our Light Troops, who have been troublesome to ‘em and to gain possession of Iron Hill.*

#### **Photograph of the Cooch House and Monument.**

Private collection

**T**homas Cooch, a farmer and mill owner, had served as a captain during the French and Indian War before being appointed colonel of the New Castle militia in 1775. Although his advanced age precluded active military service, he was an ardent supporter of the patriot cause. Learning of the British advance into Delaware, Cooch quickly moved his family to safety in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Following the American retreat, Lord Cornwallis set up headquarters at the Cooch House, while his men encamped on the property. The British remained in the area for five days, setting fire to Cooch’s mill before moving on towards the Brandywine. The Cooch House has been continuously owned by members of the Cooch family for seven generations. The granite monument in the foreground



was dedicated on September 3, 1901, the 124th anniversary of the Battle of Cooch’s Bridge.

#### **Thirteen-star American flag. 19th century.**

Gift of George H. O’Connor, 1980

**O**n June 14, 1777, Congress resolved that the “Flag of the United States” would be composed of 13 alternating red and white stripes with a canton of 13 white stars on a blue field “representing a new constellation.” Longstanding tradition suggests that the new “stars and stripes” first flew in battle just two and a half months later at the engagement at Cooch’s Bridge.

This small 19th-century example is said to have been made by a granddaughter of Betsy Ross, the legendary Philadelphia seamstress and flag-maker, whose first husband was a member of the prominent Ross family of New Castle.



## McLANE'S COMPANY

**A**mong the most legendary of Delaware's Revolutionary War heroes was Captain Allen McLane (1746-1829), who raised and led an independent company of partisan rangers through many of the major campaigns of the war. Attached to Colonel Patton's Additional Continental Regiment in 1777 and 1778, McLane's troop conducted reconnaissance missions in and around British-occupied Philadelphia.

**Ben Ferry, after James Peale (1749-1831). "Colonel Allen McLane Fighting Two British Officers." Oil on canvas, 2002.**

Collection of Edith McLane Edson, Annapolis, Maryland

**D**epicted is one of the daring exploits for which McLane was known. While scouting in the countryside near Philadelphia on the early morning of June 8, 1778, McLane and two aides were ambushed by British infantry and a troop of dragoons. His aides retreated under fire, and McLane was chased into the woods by two of the dragoons. As his horse faltered, McLane took on both of his pursuers. He shot and wounded one, and, while grappling with the sword of the other, he beat him unconscious with his discharged pistol. Though severely wounded in the hand, McLane escaped to a nearby stream where he hid and staunched his wound until joined by his men.

This is a copy of a lost painting by James Peale, known only from an early 20th-century photograph that has descended in the McLane family. The research of Edith McLane Edson has established that the original work upon which this copy is based was most probably painted in 1803, as the first of three versions that Peale created of the scene. The details of "McLane Fighting" and a similar composition known as "Revolutionary Subject" (now in a private collection) reflect McLane's own account of the event as recorded in his journal, which Peale is known to have consulted. Even truer to McLane's written account is a third version titled "Ambush of Captain McLane" which is now in the collection of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts. As the most artistically refined of the three, "Ambush of Captain McLane" is believed to be Peale's final version and the one exhibited at Peale's Museum in Philadelphia after 1813.

## THE DELAWARE LINE IN THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

**T**he Delaware Regiment won its greatest acclaim for its performance in the South during the last years of the war. In 1779, the regiment was put under the command of Baron Johann De Kalb, a German-born volunteer to the American cause who had been appointed a major general in the Continental Army. Encamped at Morristown, New Jersey, over the winter of 1779-80, De Kalb honed the regiment's already formidable skills, drilling them according to the Army's new regulations for order and discipline.

In April 1780, Washington ordered De Kalb's brigade of Delaware and Maryland Continentals to march south to help relieve the embattled American forces in the Carolinas. De Kalb was mortally wounded during the disastrous battle at Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, and the Delaware Regiment, despite valiant fighting, suffered its heaviest losses of the war.

It was under General Nathanael Greene, who took command of the Southern Department in the fall of 1780, that the Delaware Regiment made its most effective contributions as a fighting force. Following Camden, the survivors of the Delaware Regiment were divided into two companies under Captains Robert Kirkwood and Peter Jaquett. Through a long series of battles—Cowpens, Guilford Court House, Eutaw Springs, Ninety-Six, and Hobkirk's Hill—that ultimately forced the British to surrender in the South, the Delawareans performed with exceptional courage and skill and earned the esteem of the highest commanders.

In August 1781, a company raised to reinforce the Delaware line was diverted to Virginia and assigned to General Henry Knox's artillery corps. Following the decisive American victory at Yorktown in October, the Delaware detachment marched southward with troops from Maryland and Pennsylvania to join Greene's army. Their arrival enabled several of Delaware's most stalwart soldiers, Kirkwood and Jaquett among them, to return home on furlough after six years of service to their country. The

remnants of the line remained in the South until the fall of 1782, when they too marched back to Delaware.

**Address of the Officers of the Delaware Regiment to Delaware General House of Assembly, December 4th 1779. A.D., signed by 16 officers.**

Collection of Richard Saltonstall Auchincloss, Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati

**O**n December 4, 1779, 16 officers of the Delaware line enduring the bitter winter at Morristown signed their names to this petition to the Delaware Assembly stating that they had not yet received adequate supplies or clothing despite recent legislation on their behalf.

*We farther beg leave to acquaint the Hon. House that the Suit of Clothes, which they have order'd us to be supply'd with; the season is so far advanced, none of us have received a full Suit, some not one Article, and in general we want many things that are difficult to obtain, and cannot be dispensed with at this Season, but at the risque of our Health.*

The Assembly quickly responded, voting 15,000 pounds for their relief. The State Clothier, Captain George Craighead, reported the following month that although their uniforms "were not quite compleat," he had "left the Delaware Regiment Well and Better Cloathed than any Regiment in Camp."

**Unknown engraver, after Alonzo Chappel (1828-1887). "Battle of Camden-Death of De Kalb." New York: Johnson, Fry and Co., Publishers, 1857.**

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

**A**fter Charleston fell to the British in April 1780, Congress sent Major General Horatio Gates to take command of the American forces in the South. Assembling an army that included De Kalb's Maryland and Delaware Continentals and newly recruited militia from Virginia and North Carolina, Gates moved quickly to head off the British advance to North Carolina. Outside of Camden, South Carolina, on August 16, 1780, the Americans were overwhelmed in a fierce encounter with British forces commanded by General Cornwallis. De



Kalb, holding his men in the field while the rest of Gates's force scattered, was shot and stabbed several times and fell mortally wounded. As the battle became a rout, Captain Robert Kirkwood managed to organize and lead a small number of the Delaware soldiers to safety.

**Orderly book from the headquarters of General Nathanael Greene kept by Lieutenant William Lamar of the Maryland Brigade, April 5-September 4, 1781.**

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

**I**ncluded in this manuscript orderly book is General Greene's commendation to the troops following the battle at Hobkirk's Hill in South Carolina, where the Delaware troops under Captain Kirkwood performed with exceptional bravery on the front lines. Although a tough defeat for the Americans, the victory was also costly to the British, whose casualties numbered 258.

*[26 April 1781] Tho' the Action of yesterday terminated unfavorably to the American Arms, the Gen'l is happy to assure the Troops that it is by no means decisive. The extraordinary exertions of the Cavalry Comm'd by Lt. Col. [William] Washington, the Gallant behavior of the Lt. Inf'y*

*Comm'd by Capt. Kirkwood, and the firmness of the Piquets under Captains Benson and Morgan, and the good conduct of the campguards, rendered the advantage expensive to the En'y; highly merit the approbation of the Gen'l and the imitation of the rest of the troops.*

**Henry Lee (1756-1818). *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department of the United States*. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Published by Bradford & Inskeep, 1812.**

The Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson Collection

**A**s the commander of a specially selected legion of infantry and mounted troops sent to assist Greene in the South, Colonel Henry (Light Horse Harry) Lee had the opportunity to observe firsthand the performance of his compatriots. His *Memoir* remains one of the essential historical accounts of the war in the South. Of the Delaware Continentals, Lee wrote: "The state of Delaware produced one regiment only and certainly no regiment in the army surpassed it in soldiership."

The frontispiece bears a portrait of General Nathanael Greene, commander of the Southern Department after October 1780, whose leadership and brilliant strategy turned the tide of the southern campaign.

## THE DELAWARE STATE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI

**I**n May 1783, officers of the Continental Army in cantonment in Newburgh, New York, met to give final shape to a plan for a veterans' organization that would commemorate the achievements of the war and address the common concerns of the officers who were preparing to disband. Finding inspiration in the legend of the Roman hero Cincinnatus, who returned to his plow after serving his country in war, the officers chose the name "The Society of the Cincinnati." Their Institution, adopted on May 13, 1783, laid out the "immutable principles" to which all members must subscribe and called for the establishment of a branch of the Society in each of the states.

Less than two months later, the surviving officers of the Delaware line gathered in Wilmington to consider the Society's proposals. After careful deliberation, they established the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati on July 4, 1783, the seventh anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

During its first decade, the Delaware Society met annually on the Fourth of July and sent delegates to the General Society's Triennial meetings. Although the annual state meetings continued, interest and participation declined markedly by the end of the 18th century. Under pressure from Republican party members within its ranks, the members of the Delaware Society disbanded in 1802.

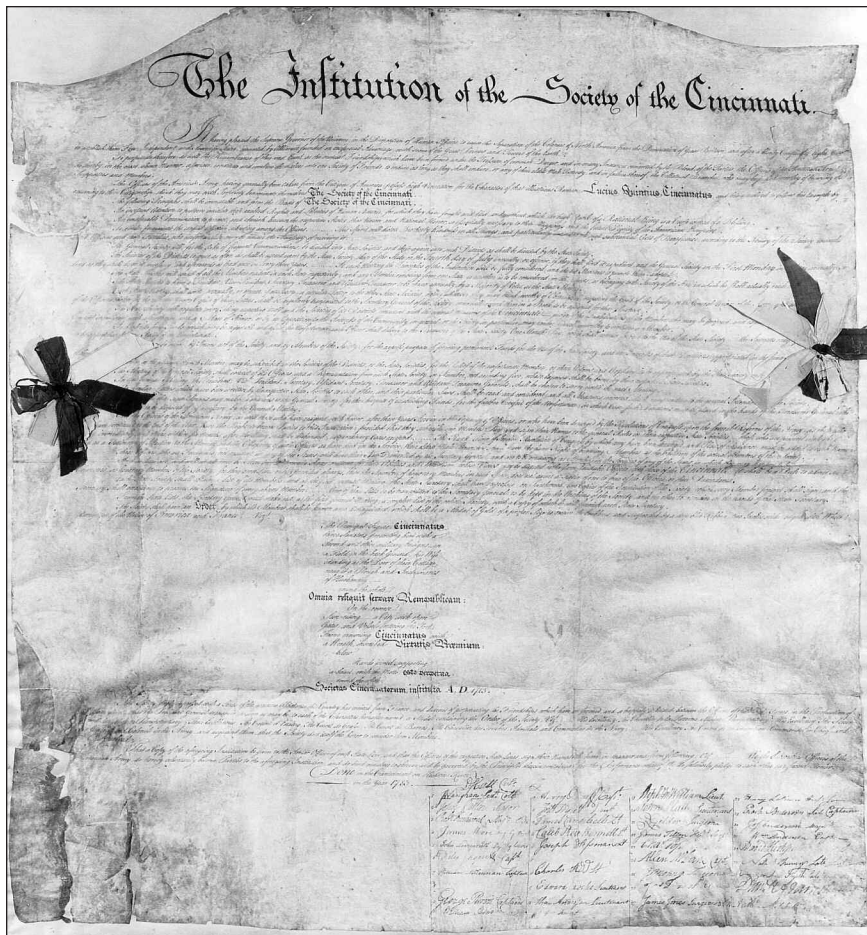
The Delaware Society was revived and reorganized in 1894 under the leadership of Captain Henry Hobart Bellas. It was formally recognized and readmitted to the General Society in 1902.

**Institution of the Society of the Cincinnati signed by the original members of the Delaware State Society, [July 4, 1783].**

Collection of the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati

**F**ollowing its acceptance by the Delaware officers, the text of the Institution was inscribed on a large sheet of parchment. On numbered blank lines, the first 21 in order of rank, the





members of the Delaware Society signed their names below the statement:

*We, the subscribers, officers of the American army, do hereby voluntarily become parties to the foregoing Institution, and do bind ourselves to observe, and be governed by, the principles therein contained. For the performance whereof we do solemnly pledge to each other our sacred honor.*

William McKennan (1758-1810). Circular letter from the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati to the other state societies, November 6, 1783. A.L.S. Docketed: "Copy read at the General Society meeting, May 5, 1784."

From the Society of the Cincinnati General Society archives

Four months after its founding, the Delaware Society sent this annual report to all of the state societies in compliance with the terms of the Institution. Addressing concerns about a widely circulated pamphlet by Aedanus Burke opposing the Society, the letter states:

*The attack, or rather the compliment paid us by the learned Cassius, we hope will have no other effect than to excite us to laudable ambition to engage our attention to maxims of prudence, and to contribute in establishing us in those republican principles of virtue, honor and honesty which we hope will ever be the more distinguishing badges of the Cincinnati.*

At the end of the missive, McKennan reports the results of the election of first officers of the Delaware Society on July 4th: Dr. James Tilton, president; Major John Patten, vice president; Captain William McKennan, secretary; Lieutenant Edward Roche, treasurer; Lieutenant Stephen McWilliam, assistant treasurer.

Society of the Cincinnati membership diploma of Rueben Gilder, October 31, 1785, signed by George Washington and Henry Knox.

Placed on loan by Dr. Middleton P. Stansbury, Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati, 1953

Rueben Gilder (1755-1794), a descendant of Dutch settlers in Delaware, was appointed surgeon of the Delaware Regiment in 1777. He served for the remainder of the war, accompanying the regiment through the brutal campaigns in the South. After the Revolution, he moved to Baltimore, where he established a thriving medical practice.

In the mid-19th century, several large sections of parchment were cut out of Gilder's Society membership certificate by a young great grandson named Oscar Stansbury, who used the

extracted pieces as part of a noise-making toy. The diploma subsequently left the family's possession, but 40 years later Stansbury had the opportunity to purchase it back, recognizing it by his handiwork. He later joined the newly revived Delaware Society, the first in the family to represent Rueben Gilder.

**William McKennan (1758-1810). "A List of the Members Belonging to the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati, April 7th 1788." A.D.S., also signed by James Tilton, President. [opposite]**

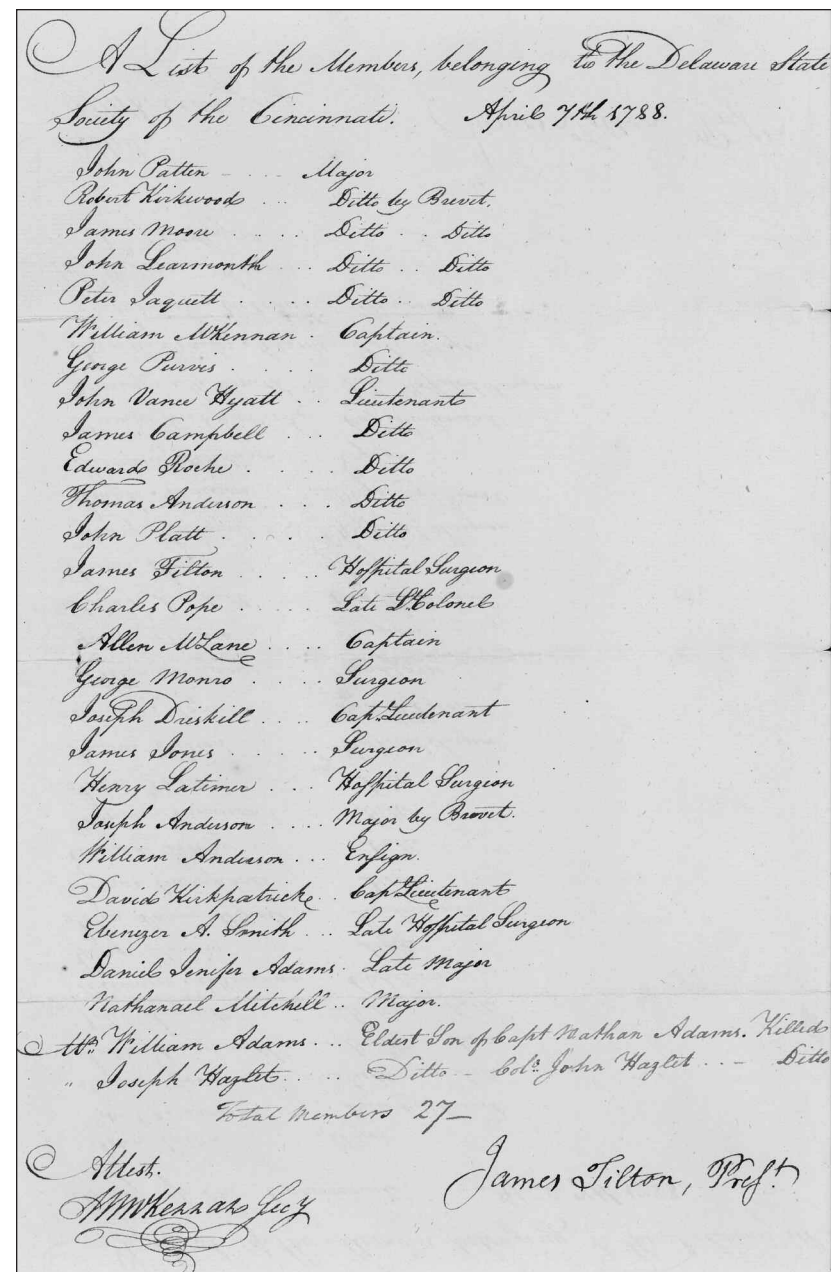
Collection of the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati

One of the smallest of the state societies, Delaware had a total of 38 members who joined between 1783 and 1802. This official list of its membership in 1788 includes 27 names. Notably absent is Colonel David Hall, who was not admitted to the Society until 1790. The list does include the Delaware Society's first "successor members": Joseph Haslet, the son of Colonel John Haslet, and William Adams, the son of Captain Nathan Adams, were admitted in 1787 in right of their fathers "who fell as victims of British tyranny in glorious defense of American independence."

George Bather & Son, engravers. "David Hall." Published in *Historical and Biographical Encyclopedia of Delaware* (Wilmington, Del.: Aldine Publishing and Engraving Co., 1882).

Purchase, 1992

The commander of the Delaware Regiment after Colonel John Haslet's death in 1777, David Hall (1752-1817) was wounded at the Battle of Germantown and never fully returned to active duty. Because he was not replaced in the regiment, his absence during the southern campaign was noted by General Nathanael Greene, who pressed charges to demand he rejoin his men. Although Hall was never brought to trial, lingering concerns over his conduct initially kept him out of the Delaware Society. In 1790, a Cincinnati "court of honor" ruled "that Col. Hall, at all times was, and now is, a man of courage, a man of honor, and a firm patriot" and admitted him to membership.



In July 1801, Hall was elected the state society's third president. As a candidate for the office of governor of Delaware on the Republican ticket the same year, he had faced harsh criticism for his Society affiliation. Although he won the governorship, Hall's first act as president of the Delaware Society was to call for its dissolution. The following year, the remaining members divided the Society's funds and declared the Delaware Society "virtually and formally dissolved."

#### The Delaware Eagle, ca. 1920.

Gift of Mrs. MacDonald Douglass in memory of her husband, 1969

The Society of the Cincinnati badge of membership, the Eagle, was designed in 1783 by Pierre L'Enfant, who arranged to have the first examples made in France. Over the years, various state societies have issued their own versions of the Eagle. The Delaware Eagle, which first appeared in 1920, was made available to members of all the state societies, and it became one of the most widely circulated of all the Eagles.



#### Delaware State Flag, ca. 1950.

Gift of the Delaware State Society of the Cincinnati, 1955

The Delaware state flag displays the Great Seal of the Delaware State adopted by members of the House of Assembly in January 1777 as a symbol of their newfound independence. Centered on a buff or yellow-colored diamond on a background of colonial blue, the seal contains emblems of the state: the river, sheaf of wheat, ear of Indian corn, and ox represent farming; the farmer and the American soldier honor Delaware's citizens; and the ship symbolizes the importance of the sea. A banner holds the Delaware state motto, "Liberty and Independence." Finally, December 7, 1787, the date on which Delaware became the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution, appears boldly on the bottom of the flag.



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### Committee

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## THE ROBERT CHARLES LAWRENCE FERGUSSON COLLECTION

Established in 1988, the Fergusson Collection honors the memory of Lieutenant Robert Charles Lawrence Fergusson (1943-1967). A member of the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia who died of wounds sustained in combat in Vietnam, Lieutenant Fergusson was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Bronze Star Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Purple Heart. The growing collection that bears his name includes rare books, broadsides, manuscripts, maps, works of art, and artifacts pertaining to the military history of the American Revolution and the art of war in the 18th century.



1783

