



## NEW JERSEY STATE ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

<b>Record Group:</b>	William Alexander, Lord Stirling (1726-1783)
<b>Series:</b>	Correspondence, 1764-1782
<b>Accession #:</b>	Unknown
<b>Series #:</b>	PALEX001
<b>Guide Date:</b>	Pre-1989 (DJ)
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[Collection History](#) | [Content Note](#) | [Contents](#)

### Biographical Note

One of the most prominent military figures in New Jersey revolutionary history was William Alexander. Born in 1726 in New York, he was of Scottish descent. In 1748, Alexander married Sarah Livingston, sister of revolutionary period governor William Livingston. A man of considerable wealth and social prominence, Alexander asserted his claim, through an uncle, to the title of Lord Stirling in 1759. Although the British House of Lords rejected his claim in 1762, Alexander continued to refer to himself as Lord Stirling, as did his contemporaries. Alexander's family resided in a large mansion in Basking Ridge.

In 1775, having committed himself to the patriot cause, Alexander was chosen by Congress to command the New Jersey militia. In March 1776, Alexander was promoted to brigadier general. George Washington, impressed by Alexander's leadership qualities, selected him to command troops for the defense of New York City. Unfortunately, at the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776, Alexander was taken prisoner. Later released in a prisoner exchange, Alexander rejoined the army and fought at the Battle of Trenton in December 1776.

In February 1777, Alexander was promoted to major general and he later commanded forces at the Battles of Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth. He was stationed at Saratoga to repel an expected British invasion from Canada when news of the American victory at Yorktown came on November 2, 1781. After wintering that year at his headquarters in Philadelphia, Alexander returned in 1782 to upstate New York. While in Albany, Alexander suffered a severe attack of gout and died on January 15, 1783 at the age of 56.

### Collection History

These documents appear to have been collected by New Jersey Adjutant General William S. Stryker in the late-19th century. However, no specific mention of these documents is made in the Adjutant General's published annual reports.

### Content Note

The documents in this collection are mainly William Alexander's correspondence with other revolutionary military leaders. The letters include discussion of troop positions, provisions, prisoners, orders, and army intelligence relating to the campaigns of 1779-81. Also included in the collection is an item of intelligence addressed to General George Washington. In addition to the military papers, there are several items of family correspondence, with Alexander's wife; his daughter, Catherine; Catherine's husband, Robert Alexander Watts; and his father-in-law, Philip Livingston.

## Contents

1. Garret Rappalie Deed - Witnessed by William Alexander, 20 August 1764
2. Daniel L. Hylton, Bill of Exchange, 6 December 1767
3. John Thurman, Jr. to William Alexander, 23 November 1769
4. John Roy to William Alexander, 16 December 1769
5. Cantonment of the troops near Middlebrook, 1778
6. Robert Alexander Watts to Sarah Livingston, 18 April 1778
7. Catherine Alexander to William Alexander, 30 June 1778
8. Captain James Duncan's Parole, 14 September 1778
9. British Army, 20 November 1778
10. William Alexander to Captain Mayo Carrington, 26 August 1779
11. Charles Stewart to William Alexander, 21 September 1778
12. Christian Tebiger to William Alexander, 23 November 1778
13. Stephen Ward to William Alexander, 26 November 1778
14. Timothy Hays' Obligation, 6 January 1779
15. William Alexander to Commissary Caen, 13 January 1779
16. Royal Flint to William Alexander, 14 January 1779
17. James Abeel to William Alexander, 25 January 1779
18. William Alexander to the Commanding Officers at Bonhamtown and Spanktown, 2 February 1779
19. Petition of Perth Amboy to William Alexander, 7 March 1779
20. William Alexander to Colonel William Davis, 25 March 1779
21. William Alexander to Charles Petit, 17 April 1779
22. Alexander Scammell to William Alexander, 29/31 July 1779
23. William Alexander to Major Kears, 10 August 1779
24. William Alexander to Major Clarke, 21 August 1779
25. William Alexander to Colonel John Nevill, 31 August 1779
26. Simon Phillips to William Alexander, 23 September 1779
27. [?] to William Alexander, 3 November 1779
28. John Hoff to William Alexander, 17 November 1779
29. William Alexander to Colonel John Cox, 7 October 1781
30. William Alexander to Colonel Benjamin Tupper, 18 October 1781
31. William Alexander to Major General William Heath, 23 October 1781
32. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton, 24 October 1781

33. William Alexander to Major General William Heath, 24 October 1781
34. William Alexander to Colonel Marinus Willet, 24 October 1781
35. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton & General William Heath, 27 October 1781
36. William Alexander to Fellows and Rossetter, 27 October 1781
37. William Alexander to Colonel Blair, 29 October 1781
38. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton & General William Heath, 29 October 1781
39. [?] to General Petrus Ten Broeck, 29 October 1781
40. Return of Prisoners in Goal, 29 October 1781
41. William Alexander to Colonel Marinus Willet, 29 October 1781
42. William Alexander to Lieutenant Nathan Weare, 30 October 1781
43. William Alexander to General William Heath, 31 October 1781
44. William Alexander to Captain Nehemiah Emerson, 1 November 1781
45. William Alexander to Captain Asa Senter, 1 November 1781
46. William Alexander to Colonel Christopher Yates, 1 November 1781
47. William Alexander to Colonel Christopher Yates, 1 November 1781
48. William Alexander to Christopher Yates and Ensign John [?] Adams, 1 November 1781
49. Tryon County Orders, 2 November 1781
50. William Alexander to Colonel Barry St. Leger, 2 November 1781
51. William Alexander to Colonel Marinus Willet, 2/5 November 1781
52. Return of Provisions and Stores Remaining on Hand at Saratoga, 3 November 1781
53. Return of Prisoners, 9 November 1781
54. William Alexander to General William Heath, 9 November 1781
55. William Alexander to General William Heath, 12 November 1781
56. William Alexander to Colonel Benjamin Tupper, 12 November 1781
57. Captain James Carr's Report, 15 November 1781
58. Petition of Henry Smith and Emanuel Humphries to William Alexander, 9 September 1782
59. Intelligence [to General George Washington], 14 September 14, 1782
60. William Alexander to Lieutenant Colonel George Reids, 20 September 1782
61. William Alexander to Lieutenant Colonel Henry Dearborn, 23 September 1782
62. Jacob Bayley to Governor George Clinton, 30 September 1782
63. William Alexander to Major General Henry Knox, 2 October 1782
64. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton, 6 October 1782 [Copy]
65. Examination of Captain Jeremiah Snyder, taken by Governor George Clinton, 7 October 1782 [Copy]
66. William Alexander to Colonel Henry Dearborn, 7 October 1782

67. William Alexander to Lieutenant Colonel George Reid, 8 October 1782
68. William Alexander to Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Weisenfels, 10 October 1782
69. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton, 12 October 1782
70. Letter to Governor Jonathan Trumbull; Governor John Hancock, Governor of New Hampshire, 14 October 1780
71. Order for "Bread to be Baked," 16 October 1782
72. William Alexander to Colonel Henry Dearborn, 21 October 1782
73. William Alexander to General Sir Frederick Haldiman, 21 October 1782
74. William Alexander to General Philip Schuyler, 21 October 1780
75. Examination of John Fifield, 22 October 1782
76. William Alexander to Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Weisenfels, 24 October 1782
77. William Alexander to Governor George Clinton, 25 October 1782
78. William Alexander to General Edward Hand, 26 October 1782
79. William Alexander to Major General Henry Knox, 26 October 1782
80. Robert Watts and Mathew Clarkson, Renunciation of Executorship of Estate of Governor William Livingston, 30 January 1801

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If you have any questions about the information in this collection guide, please contact [njarchives@sos.state.nj.us](mailto:njarchives@sos.state.nj.us)