

New Jersey State Archives Mini Exhibits

A (Meeting) House Divided: Quakers in the Revolutionary War

April 2026

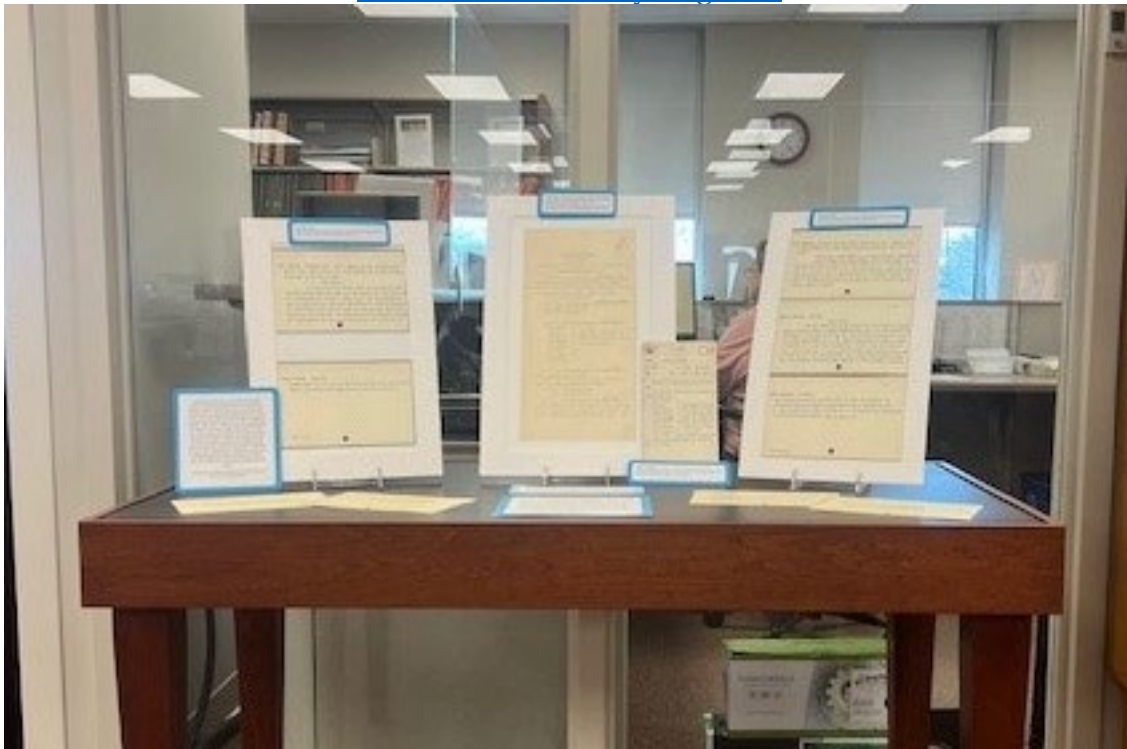
The Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, has opposed war and violence since its founding, seeking instead to eliminate the causes of conflict and to ease the suffering war creates.

At the onset of the Revolutionary War, the Friends adopted a neutral stance and were consequently persecuted by both British loyalists and American Whigs. Those who adhered to the sect's pacifist principles faced significant hardship. They were often labeled as Tories by Patriots and subjected to popular hostility and other forms of mistreatment.

Several hundred Friends – among them Betsy Ross – felt a strong pull toward the revolutionary cause, and some even joined the armed forces, including the notable Rhode Island general Nathanael Greene. In accordance with its doctrine, the Society disowned members who took up arms or held political office. Nearly 1,000 Quakers were disowned over the course of the war, the vast majority for military participation.

Excerpts taken from "Role of Quakers in the American Revolution"

www.womenhistoryblog.com



HAINES, RICHARD, JR.

Private, Captain William Shute's 4th Company, 2nd Regiment, New Jersey Continental Line; enlisted November, 1775; mustered, Burlington Barracks, January 17, 1776, by Gunning Bedford, Deputy Muster Master General.

Reported to the Pilesgrove, Salem County, Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends December 25, 1775, as having enlisted as a soldier and gone away in the service; was disowned. (MSS. No. 3791, page 1; Muster Roll.)

WSP:W
12-15-31

Richard Haines Jr.

LIPPINCOTT, HENRY.

Reported to the Chesterfield Monthly Meeting of the Society of Friends, September 4, 1777, as being concerned with the Militia; disowned January 1, 1778, for "going out in Warlike manner".
(MSS. No. 3786, page 5.)

WSP:W
4-21-32

Henry Lippincott

LEEDS, JEREMIAH- Gloucester County. Age 22. Private, 3d regt., Gloucester County Militia, 1776. First Lieutenant, Capt. Joseph Conover's co., 3d regt., Gloucester County, Sept. 18, 1777 (ref. ms. 646).

Active Service.

As Private enlisted Sept. 1776 and served one month under Capt. Nehemiah Morse; enlisted latter part of Nov. 1776, and served one and a half months under Capt. Zepheniah Steelman, at battle of Trenton, Jan. 2, 1777; enlisted March 1777; served one month under Capt. George Payne; enlisted May 1777; served one month under Capt. Samuel Snell; enlisted June 1777, served one month under Capt. William Price; enlisted Sept. 1777, served under Capt. Christopher Rape; as Lieutenant, served under Capt. Joseph Conover in Oct. Nov. and Dec. 1777 and Jan. 1778, and Oct. 1778; at

2.

LEEDS, JEREMIAH- (continued)

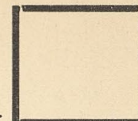
Chestnut Neck in Oct. 1778 (ref. inv. 5686,); was disowned by the Great Egg Harbor Meeting on the 6th May 1776 on charge of bearing arms (ref. ms. 3789, p. 2).

WSP- 4-12-16.

Jeremiah Leeds

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NAME Newbold, William

Residence County Burlington.

Born Ref. MSS. No. 3786, page 4.

Chesterfield Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1775-
1785:

2 Mo. 6th 1777 - Upper Springfield Preparative
Meeting reports that -

Caleb Shreeve,	}	
John Wood,	}	were concerned in Mili-
John Black, Jr.,	}	tary Service and seemed
Joshua Shreve,	}	to justify their con-
William Newbold,	}	duct. Some Friends to
Joseph Newbold,	}	visit them and try to
John Middleton,	}	bring them to a sense
William Wood, Jr.,	}	of the wrong.

5 Mo. 1st 1777 - William Newbold, Joseph Newbold, Joshua Shreve, John Black, Jr. and William Wood, Jr. disowned.

William Newbold

SHREVE, BENJAMIN- Mansfield, Burlington County. Born July 17, 1759. Seaman, letter of marque, "Trooper" Capt. Samuel Howell, enlisted in Philadelphia, 1779, served six months.

Private, Capt. Edward Thomas's co., 1st regt., Burlington County Militia.

First Lieutenant, Capt. Richard Shreve's Troop of Light Horse, 1st regt., Burlington County Militia, prior to Feb. 1781; commissioned Aug. 7, 1782 (ref. inv. 4632, ms. 111); troop was raised in the Townships of Springfield, Mansfield, Chesterfield and New Hanover and was to consist of 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Cornet, 4 Sergeants, 1 Trumpeter and 29 Privates (ref. ms. 109); acts of Jan. 8 1781 and June 24, 1782 (ref. laws N. J. 1776-82).

2.

SHREVE, BENJAMIN- (continued)

Active Service.

Served at Wading River Bridge, two days, Feb. 1781; served with detachment of 15 men on a march to Clamtown (Tuckerton) early part of Oct. 1782; served with detachment of 8 men between 8th and 13th Oct. 1782; served with detachment of 17 men on a march toward Wiretorn, Nov. 5, 1782; served with detachment of 18 men on a march to Wiretorn, Dec. 7, 1782, served thirteen days; in service 7 days, 23d to 30th Dec. 1782, along the coast (ref. ms. 111); in skirmish at Cedar Creek, Monmouth County, Dec. 28, 1782 (ref. rej. 6373, Enos Lippincott); served at Cedar Creek, Monmouth County, Jan. 1783; wounded on the knee near Cedar Creek, Jan. 6, 1783, by reason of which he

3.

SHREVE, BENJAMIN- (continued)

was compelled to retire from the service (ref. inv. 4632); was reported to the Springfield Preparative Meeting for having taken up arms in a military way, Jan. 2, 1783; disowned by the Society of Friends, Feb. 6, 1783 because of his determination to continue his military service. (ref. ms. 3786, p. 10).

Benjamin Shreve

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CHESTERFIELD MONTHLY MEETING

Minutes, 1775-1785.

Chesterfield Monthly Meeting of Friends.

Minute Book 2, p. 505.

7 Mo. 8 . 1775 - William Plascott being visited by Friends for training
and bearing arms and justifying this breach of discipline is disowned.

with being active in Military Affairs. Friends to treat with him.

6 Mo. 5 . 1777 - John Andrews disowned.

Minute Book 2, p. 548-551.

12 Mo. 5 . 1776 - Joel Middleton, member of Chesterfield Preparative Meeting reported concerned in Military Service.

4 Mo. 3 . 1777 - He is disowned.

Same, p. 551.

2 Mo. 6 . 1777 - Upper Springfield Preparative Meeting reports that -

Caleb Shreeve,	:	
John Wood,	:	were concerned in Military Service and
John Black, Jr.,	:	seemed to justify their conduct. Some
Joshua Shreve,	:	Friends to visit them and try to bring them
William Newbold,	:	to a sense of the wrong.
Joseph Newbold,	:	
John Middleton,	:	
William Wood, Jr.,	:	

p. 553-567.

5 Mo. 1 . 1777 - William Newbold, Joseph Newbold, Joshua Shreve, John
Black, Jr. and William Wood, Jr. disowned.

12 Mo. 4 . 1777 - John Wood acknowledged his error in accepting a Com-
mission under the present government. Read and accepted.

12 Mo. 4 . 1777 - John Middleton disowned.

4 . 1777 - Caleb Shreve disowned.

Same, p. 555.

6 Mo. 5 . 1777 - Stony Brook Preparative Meeting informs that Joseph
Olden hath administered the oath in the course of his office as Coroner, under
the former Government and also so far concerned in promoting Military Measures
as to be a Committeeman in the present time of Commotion. Friends to visit
him.

Chesterfield Monthly Meeting Minutes, 1775-1785

**SDEA1001. Department of Defense. Adjutant General's Office: Revolutionary War.
Numbered Manuscripts, ca. 1776-1890s. No. 3786**

To the Governor and Council of New Jersey
The Remonstrance
Of the Subscribers, inhabitants of the Township of Woodbridge
Sheweth

That on the 16th Inst. we were Ordered to appear before
Four Magistrates and two Military Officers (Viz: Nicajah Durin,
Henry Truman, Jeremiah Manning, Jacob Martin, John Webster &
Samuel Crow, to give our Reasons for refusing to procure a man to
serve in the Army for nine months, their being 18 of us Clapsed together,
the greater Number of whom were of the People called Quakers and all
Crafted. We of that People informed them it was inconsistent with
our Religious Principles to be concerned in Wars either personally or
by giving Money to hire a Substitute for that purpose, After which we
withdrew with Assurances from them, that they would be favorable
towards us, but now inconsistent with their professions of Moderation
will appear by the following sums they Fined us, (Viz)

Nehemiah Marsh	\$ 200. 0. 0
John Shotwell	250. 0. 0
Joseph Shotwell Junr.	250. 0. 0
William Shotwell	250. 0. 0
Jacob Thorne	200. 0. 0
Edward Howe	200. 0. 0
Marmaduke Hunt	200. 0. 0
William Hampton	100. 0. 0
Isaac Shotwell	100. 0. 0
Isaac Thorne	40. 0. 0
Benjamin Thorne	40. 0. 0
James Fitz Randolph	40. 0. 0
	\$ 1960. 0. 0

And one of Number being from home is liable to be also Fined,
At the same time they received 20 Dollars a P^{ce} from 5 who were of the same

Claps and not Members of our Society. It is apparent (if the above sums
are insisted on and our moveable Estates (some of which have been con-
siderably striped already for refusing to bear Arms when called upon) that the
whole of what several of us have in Personal Estate will not be sufficient to
Answer the same. The consequence then we apprehend will be Impri-
sonment and our Families thereby exposed to great sufferings.

We trust you will take the matter under consideration and so
far interpose on our behalf as to avert the threatening grievous sufferings
of a Number of Peaceable Inhabitants.

Woodbridge 6th 19. 1778

Mordecai Marsh

John Shotwell

Jos. Shotwell junr.

William Shotwell junr.

Jacob Thorn

William Hamton

Isaac Shotwell

Benjamin Thorn

Isaac Thorne

Edward Moore

Marmaduke Hunt

James Fitz Randolph

Petition of Quakers to the Assembly, June 19, 1778

SDEA1001. Department of Defense. Adjutant General's Office: Revolutionary War.
Numbered Manuscripts, ca. 1776-1890s. No. 10099