

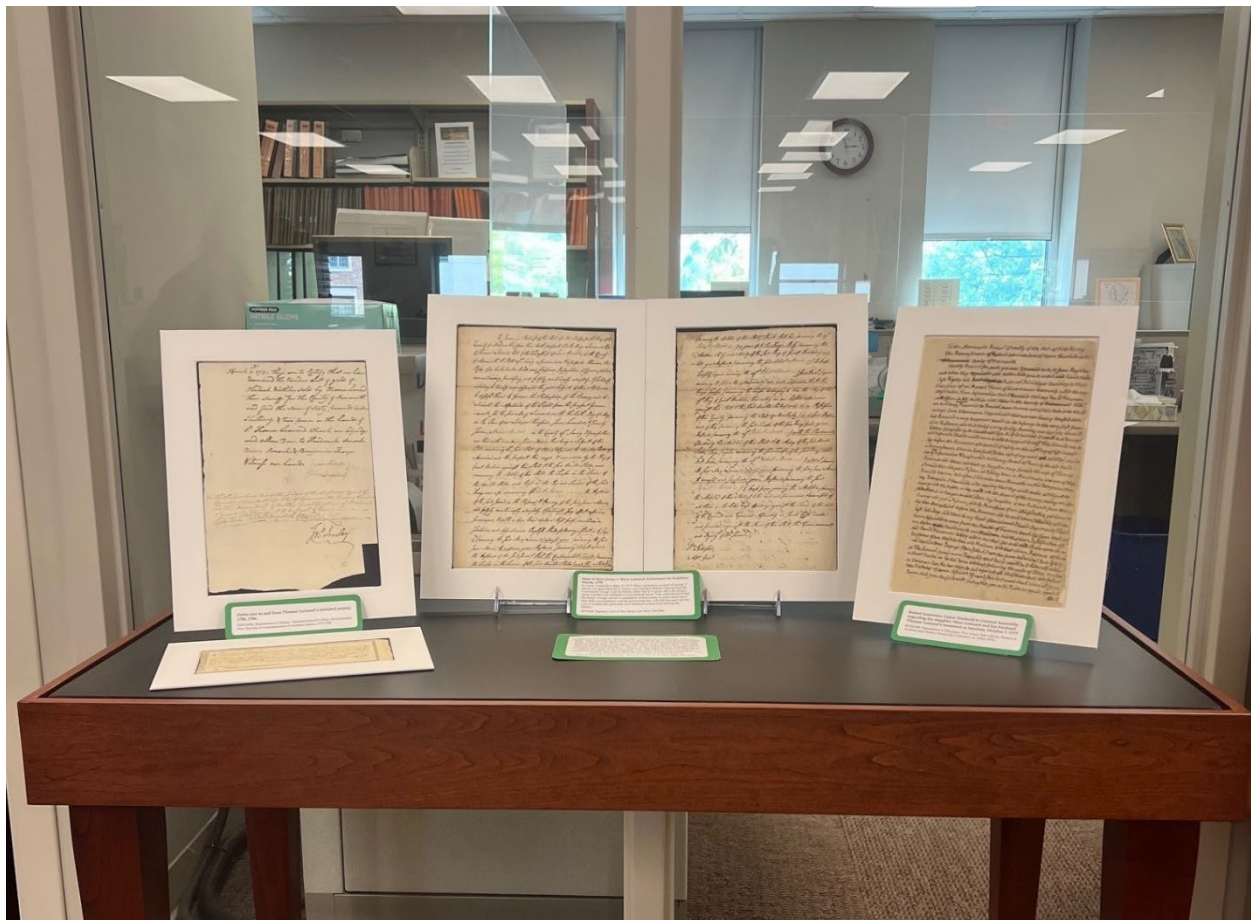
New Jersey State Archives Mini Exhibits

Thomas and Mary Leonard: Loyalists during the Revolutionary War

May 2026

May's mini exhibit in the Manuscript Reading Room highlights loyalists Thomas and Mary Leonard. Before the Revolution, Thomas served as Sheriff of Monmouth County.

He later became a Major in the New Jersey Volunteers, a Loyalist regiment. He was later captured and imprisoned in Reading, Pennsylvania. His wife Mary, steadfast in her loyalty to both her husband and the Crown, faced her own ordeal when she was indicted for seditious words.



To the Honourable General Assembly of the State of New Jersey
The Remonstrance of Robert Lawrence late of Upper Freehold in the
~~County of Monmouth~~ County of Monmouth

Worthy Patriots, for such you was esteemed to be, by your Constitu-
ents when they appointed and authorized you to watch and guard their
Just Rights and ~~Privileges~~ Natural Privileges according to the
Directions of our Present Form of Government commonly called the new
Constitution. From Information that I Received that one David Foreman
and Officer in the Militia with others in the County of Monmouth had
an arbitrary ^{major} Presumed to Banish some Women out of this State into the E-
nemy's lines, Whereupon I apprehended that our new happy Constitution
had Received a very dangerous Wound in its Infancy in the very first Year
of its Existence, and that unless a very speedy Remedy was applied it would
either languish by its Wound and Dye, or if it survived it would be so decepti-
and deformed that it would never be able to support it self. This Induced me to
lay before the Governor and Council of Safety on the 28th day of last August
a Remonstrance wherein I set forth (To the best of my weak ~~and~~ Ability) Accord-
ing to Information Theafore said Arbitrary stretch of Power by the said David
Foreman and others, and that my Daughter Mary Leonard the wife of Thomas
Leonard then and yet a Prisoner at Red Bank town in Pennsylvania, was one of those
Banished Women. And after I had made some Remarks on this dangerous dan-
gerous Enterprise I concluded with hoping that they would make an diligent an-
Inquiry into the matter as they would into the approach of the Enemy seeing our Con-
stitution is in danger on both sides. My Daughter is now Returned from the
Enemy and yet a Prisoner, and by Permission of our Chief Justice got leave to
lay her Complaint before the Governor and Council where I attended with her
last Saturday. And there to my great Astonishment I heard Arguments, That I
never suspected to come from the Mouths of Freeman much less from those who
are chosen by the Souldiers to our Freedom, and that was a Justification of the
said David Foreman's Acting under martial Law, in his bold stroke upon the very
Existence of our Constitution and Freedom and that under Pretence of Gene-
ral Washington's Express Order (which I am far from believing) But if it is
so The General surely never Expected that David would do it him self without
a Court Martial as he has done without following the rules of either Martial
or Common Law. He has chose to act against all Christian Laws, and follow
the Dictates of some African Tyrant. It is but next week when all your
Power that your Constituents intrusted you with, Returns again again in
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the
Honor of the People, And I cannot persuade myself that you will willingly
leave Our Infant Constitution languishing and dying of the aforesaid wound
Without some marks of Abhorrence of so Insolent and daring Attempt upon
Our Liberty, That has Already cost us much blood and Treasure to Preserve it
Which though you have not time to try and let him Answer for himself if a-
ny Answer he has Yet it may be done by Resolves, or otherwise That you
In your Wisdom shall think fit to Recommend it to the next Assembly
for their most serious Consideration, That Ages to come may look back to the Ori-
ginal of their Freedom and see that the very first Assembly that ever sat upon it
the new Constitution, Did their utmost Endeavour to Preserve it, and bring those
that violate it to just Punishment.

In Answer to the Gentlemen of the Councils Argument to Defend David
Foreman under his Prebence of Martial Law I Answer If he had acted
by that Law which he has not he ought first to Proclaim it That the Peo-
ple might know by what Law they are Governed (as I told those Gentlemen last
Saturday) and now I have farther to say That the Common Law must
Rule and be the Guide of Government until such Proclamation is made
which is never done but in the greatest Extremity and Even in such times
but seldom, For it is Abhorred by the English Constitution Because it Renders
the Military Independent of and Superior to the Civil Power, and one of the Arti-
cles complained of against the Administration of the present King of Great Brit-
ain by the thirteen United States see your own Votes and Proceedings page 81 see
also in page 95 the Joint Opinion of General Washington and our Governor
Concerning the State of the Militia in Contradiction to David Foremans Plea
of the Generals Orders.

October the 7th 1777

Robert Lawrence

Robert Lawrence, Upper Freehold. To General Assembly. October 7, 1777

David Forman, an officer of militia, with others in Monmouth County presumed to banish some women from New Jersey across the enemy's lines; remonstrance laid before Governor and Council August 28th against Forman's seizure of arbitrary power; Mary Leonard, daughter of petitioner and wife of Thomas Leonard, then and yet a prisoner at Redingtown in Pennsylvania, one of those banished; at inquiry before Governor and Council, Forman's action justified; he should be brought to answer for his actions before the Legislature that their protest may go down in history as a glorious defense of America's infant independence.

SEDSL006. New Jersey State Library. Bureau of Archives and History [BAH]
Manuscript Collection. Box 5-04 Folder 129

The Jurors in Behalf of the State of New Jersey, for the Body of the
County of Monmouth — upon their oath present, that this State of New Jersey
and the United States of America, now are, and for sometime past have been at
open War & Enmity with the King of Great Britain; and that Thomas Leonard
— lately of Middletown in the County of Essex the first — Day of Novem-
ber — in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty one and
during the War ~~from~~ at Middle Town — in the said County of Monmouth,
— & within the Jurisdiction of this Court, procured & had a Quantity of
~~Provisions, to wit~~ Cyder — — — — — with Intention there-
and there, falsely & traitorously to convey transport & send the same Cyder —
— to the Subjects & Troops of the said King of Great Britain, pas-
sant being the Enemies of this State & the said United States, against the Peace of
this State, the Government & Dignity of the same; And the Jurors aforesaid upon their
oath do further present that the said Thomas Leonard — on the same
first — Day of November in the Year last aforesaid from Middletown
aforesaid in the County of Jurisdiction aforesaid did voluntarily & unlawfully
send and convey a Quantity of Provisions, to wit Cyder —
to the Enemies aforesaid of this State & the said United States; against the Peace of this State
the Government and Dignity of the same —
Signed
J. Peterson Mth Genl.

[State of New Jersey v. Thomas Leonard. Indictment for Misdemeanor: Supplying the Enemy.](#)

SSV00001. New Jersey State Supreme Court Case Files, 1704-1844. Case No. 36644

Monmouth County N.J.

June 1770

The State

vs

Mary Leonard,
(Wife of Thos. Leonard)

Indict. per

Victoria Wood

Attest Bill

David Forman Forman

The Jurors, in Behalf of the State of New Jersey, for the King of the
County of Monmouth, upon their Oath perempt, That Mary Leonard, Wife
of Thomas Leonard, late of the Township of Lower Freehold, in the County
of Monmouth, & State aforesaid, being a pernicious & disaffected Woman, &
Possess of a turbulent Mind and seditious Disposition & Quaker spirit,
and contriving, practising and falsely, maliciously, advisedly, & seditiously
intending to terrify and defame the good Subjects of this State, and
to dissuade them to favour the Pretensions of the Enemy, and to
alienate the Affections of the People from the present Govern-
ment, she the said Mary Leonard, on the thirtieth Day of May,
in the Year of our Lord, one thousand, seven hundred, & seventy
seven, at Lower Freehold — in the County aforesaid, having dispersed them
and then with a certain Jane Morris, then being a Subject of this
State, concerning the said State of New Jersey, and the United States of
America, and the present War waged & carried on by the King of
Great Britain against this State & the said United States, and
concerning the Militia of this State, the Troops in the Service of
the United States, and those in the Pay and Service of the said
King, and also concerning Robert Morris — the Husband
of the said Jane, in the Presence & Hearing of the said Jane Morris,
did falsely, maliciously, advisedly, & seditiously say, assert, affirm,
pronounce, & with a loud Voice declare these false, malicious,
seditious, and seditious English Words following, that is to say,
"I (meaning the said Mary Leonard) advise you (meaning the said
Jane Morris) to inform your Husband (meaning Robert Morris,
the Husband of the said Jane) that the Continental Troops (meaning
the Troops in the Service of the said United States) and the Militia

(meaning the Militia of this State) think that he (meaning the af.
Robert Morris -) is gone off to the King's Party (meaning the
Whig Party, and King of the said King of Great Britain) and
tell your Husband (meaning the said Robert Morris -) to keep
himself (again meaning the af. Robert Morris -) secret. I (again
meaning the said Mary Leonard) am well informed, that the
King's Troops (meaning the Troops belonging to His Majesty the
King of Great Britain, then acting in an hostile Manner
against this State, & the said United States) will be in Possession
of this Country (meaning the State of New Jersey) in a few Days,
and if they (meaning the said Troops of the said King) find your
Husband (meaning the af. Robert Morris -) with the Provincials,
(meaning the Militia of this State & the Army of the said United
States) they (again meaning the said Troops of the said King) will
kill him (meaning the af. Robert Morris -) and I (meaning
the said Mary Leonard) advise you (meaning the said Mary Morris)
to counsel and persuade your Husband (meaning the said
Robert Morris -) to keep from joining the Militia (meaning
the Militia of this State) to the evil and pernicious Example of
all others in the like Case offending, against the Sense of the Acts
of the Council and General Assembly in such Case made
and provided, against the Peace of this State, the Government,
and Dignity of the same.

Wm. Patterson,
Att. Gen.

[State of New Jersey v. Mary Leonard \(Wife of Thomas Leonard.\) Indictment for Seditious Words.](#)

SSV00001. New Jersey State Supreme Court Case Files, 1704-1844. Case No. 36727