

Thanks for downloading this free sample, an article published in the July 2018 issue of *Digging History Magazine*, which featured articles related to early American history, including the Revolutionary War. To purchase the entire issue see this link (the cover and table of contents are included at the end of this sample):

[https://digging-history.com/store/?model\\_number=july-2018](https://digging-history.com/store/?model_number=july-2018)

I hope you will consider a subscription to *Digging History Magazine*, a bi-monthly digital publication. There are now four affordable subscription options, three of which are automatically recurring until you tell me you'd like to cancel. Details can be found here:

<https://digging-history.com/digging-history-magazine-subscription/>

Be sure and check out the new specially-priced one-year only subscription (non-recurring with no obligation unless you tell me you'd like to continue).

Questions? Please contact me at [seh@digging-history.com](mailto:seh@digging-history.com).

Thanks again,

Sharon Hall  
Editor, Publisher, Researcher, Writer and Graphic Designer  
*Digging History Magazine*

threat to their families and their livelihood. These men wore no uniforms except for only the few articles of clothing they probably owned. These men received no payment for their valor except the security in knowing their homes were safe from British attack. These men had no training except for learning how to survive against Native American attacks on the colonial frontier. One year and one week after the Battle of Kings Mountain, Cornwallis surrendered his British forces in defeat in Yorktown, Virginia.

The fearlessness shown by the Overmountain Men could be described as the first example of that indignantly proud spirit of Appalachia. These men deserve more than a passing mention in a textbook or the backseat from professional historians. These men from Appalachia saved America.



KDMGPhotography

*Kalen Martin-Gross is proud of her deep Appalachian roots. She told me the preceding story was one of her favorites. Kalen is a regular contributor to Digging History Magazine with her "Appalachian Histories & Mysteries" column. She is also a talented photographer. Please support Kalen by visiting her web site:*

*<http://www.kdmgphotography.com/>*

## Drawing the Line:



### Quakers in Conscientious Crisis

Genealogists researching family history who discover Quaker ancestry may assume they will find no Revolutionary War patriot service. That would be an incorrect assumption, however. For Quakers, members of the Religious Society of Friends, the volatile era leading up to and including the Revolutionary War presented unique challenges in regards to their tenets of faith.

While Quakers generally supported secular governance, they were opposed to any war conducted to support that government. It was simply forbidden to take up arms for any cause. Failure to adhere to these beliefs might result in excommunication.

How might a Quaker respond to growing British oppression? While others were beginning to protest with threats of violent retribution, Quakers took the path of resistance via non-importation agreements. In doing so, Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where large numbers of Quakers were concentrated, remained relatively peaceful. Quakers much preferred diplomacy to ameliorate escalating political tensions.

The so-called Townsend Acts of 1767 brought layer upon layer of taxation to American colonists, whether directly or indirectly. Everything not produced in the colonies was imported from Britain and a tax imposed on vital commodities such as paper and tea. Taxes raised were meant to pay the salaries of governors and judges to enforce the onerous laws laid upon the backs of colonists.

Despite efforts to promote a sensible royal government, Quakers were approaching the point of being overwhelmed and forced to make an important conscientious decision.

Prior to 1768 direct involvement in promoting armed resistance would result in a Quaker's excommunication. By 1768 it became a matter of which side Quakers were taking. Historically, they had suffered much persecution. Now they were being pressured by fellow colonists to "Join or Die". Interestingly, "Join or Die" is thought to have been the first political cartoon created in America by Benjamin Franklin, a Quaker.

Following the skirmish at Lexington in April 1775 resulting in eight American deaths, tensions escalated across the colonies. Pennsylvanians, Quakers in particular, needed to decide where their loyalties resided – where they Loyalists or Patriots? As late as 1775 Quakers were still attempting diplomacy rather than entering into direct conflicts:

*Having considered with real sorrow, the unhappy contest between the legislature of Great Britain and the people of these Colonies, and the animosities consequent thereon; we have by repeated public advices and private admonitions, used our endeavors to dissuade the members of our religions society from joining with the public resolutions promoted and entered into by some of the people, which as we apprehended, so we now find have increased contention and produced great discord and confusion.<sup>1</sup>*

In the autumn of 1776 Philadelphia Quakers held their yearly meeting and drew their own line in the sand:

*It is our judgment [it laid down] that such who make religions profession with us and do either openly or by connivance pay any fine, penalty or tax in lieu of their personal services for carrying on the war under the prevailing commotions, or who do consent to, and allow their children, apprentices, or servants to act therein, do thereby violate our Christian testimony and by so*

*doing, manifest that they are not in religious fellowship with us.<sup>2</sup>*

Furthermore, the group "affectionately desired" that Friends not engage in any trade or business transaction which might be seen as promoting war. Paper currency called "Continental" had been created by the Second Continental Congress in 1775. Some Quakers refused to utilize the currency.

These were the views of what one might call "Mainline Quakers", yet there were others who would later organize as "Free Quakers" who would, rather than standing aside, would instead stand side by side fellow American colonists. For Free Quakers neutrality was simply not an option. Who were these Free Quakers?

Thomas Paine chose pen and paper to make the case for advancing the cause of liberty for all, despite his decidedly Quaker-influenced ideology. Near the halfway mark of his *Common Sense* pamphlet, he wrote:

*Every quiet method for peace hath been ineffectual. Our prayers have been rejected with disdain; and hath tended to convince us that nothing flatters vanity or confirms obstinacy in Kings more than repeated petitioning – and nothing hath contributed more than that very measure to make the Kings of Europe absolute. Witness Denmark and Sweden. Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child.<sup>3</sup>*

Were Paine's conclusions mere resignation or a genuine call to armed conflict? His writings most assuredly rankled the British, yet bolstered Patriot sentiment in the Colonies. Within months of his anonymously-published 47-page pamphlet, sales had risen to more than half a million copies.

Perhaps it even spurred once reluctant upper-crust residents of Philadelphia to action. Although their band was mockingly referred to as the “Lady’s Light Infantry” or the “Silk Stocking Company”, it was led by Captain Sharpe Delaney and Lieutenant Tench Tilghman.

Irish-born Delaney was the great-grandson of Anthony Sharp, a noted Dublin Quaker and wool merchant. Tench Tilghman’s family was well off and loyal to the Crown, but when he participated in the non-importation resolutions Tories burned down his saddle-making shop. Fight he must!

Major General Nathanael Greene would struggle with the dictates of his Quaker faith while serving the cause of liberty. On May 8, 1775 his service escalated rapidly when he was promoted from Private to Major General of the Rhode Island Army of Observation. By that time he had already been excommunicated for his willingness to take up arms and fight the British. Greene would go on to become one of General George Washington’s most loyal and reliable officers.

Rising from the ranks of excommunicated Quakers were two notable men: Owen Biddle and John Lacey. Southeastern Pennsylvania Monthly Meetings saw a drastic reduction of membership between the years 1775 and 1783 as 420 were given the boot. “In addition, 16 Friends were expelled for joining the British Army, while 15 of the original 420 changed sides in the conflict, were attainted for treason, and had their property confiscated.”<sup>4</sup>

Owen Biddle’s great grandfather, William Biddle, arrived in New Jersey in 1681, two years before William Penn arrived in neighboring Pennsylvania. Owen, the oldest of five children of John and Sarah (Owen) Biddle, was born in 1737. He and his younger brother Clement both served in

the Continental Army. Clement raised a Philadelphia militia in 1775 known as the “Quaker Blues”. In July 1776 Clement was commissioned as deputy quartermaster general for Pennsylvania and New York. At Trenton General Washington awarded him the honor of receiving the Hessian swords of surrender.<sup>5</sup>

In July of 1776 Owen was appointed by the Pennsylvania State Assembly to the Committee of Safety, responsible for Pennsylvania military operation. He later served as an assistant to Clement as the assistant commissary general of forage. Owen had a difficult job “laboring for three bleak years to obtain provisions for army horses and other draft animals, faced four chronic and intractable problems: a lack of funds, rampant inflation, a shortage of trained and trustworthy subordinates, and the apathy or hostility of many farmers.”<sup>6</sup>

A 1780 reorganization of the Quartermaster Department forced the resignation of Owen Biddle and General Greene. Still, both brothers knew their country needed them. Clement was particularly determined to see it through to the end when he wrote to Owen on May 5, 1777: “I will never quit with Dishonour and am ready to render any Service which my Country may require of me.”<sup>7</sup>

Owen Biddle had experienced several personal setbacks over the years, at one time forced to declare bankruptcy. The British burned down Peel Hall, his country estate. Creditors later seized his possessions to satisfy his debts. Despite having joined the Free Quaker movement, Owen decided to admit his original error and was allowed to rejoin his original Meeting without animosity on May 29, 1783. In the ensuing years he pursued various interests in education and science.

He died on March 10, 1799, having recently settled all of his debts.

Unlike Owen and Clement Biddle, John Lacey, Jr., the oldest child of John and Jane (Chapman) Lacey grew up in the remote areas of Bucks County. His immigrant ancestor, William Lacey, had arrived in the 1680s, settling near Wrightstown. The Lacey family were farmers and members of the Society of Friends.

John had little in the way of formal education and at the age of fourteen was sent to work in his father's mills and copper shops. In 1773 twenty-one-year old John traveled with his Uncle Zebulon Heston, a Quaker minister, to visit the Delaware Indians of Ohio. The two men traveled a thousand miles in about ten weeks and John kept a journal. It was his first opportunity to "see the world". Upon returning to Wrightstown, his father put him in charge of the family's mill operations.

The events of Lexington and Concord in April of 1775 stirred John Lacey. He was well aware of increasing British aggression, and even more importantly, that something must be done to defend his country. Surely realizing his actions would eventually cost him dearly, he joined and led the Second Battalion of the Bucks County Militia in July 1775. His Quaker family and friends pleaded with him to reconsider; he refused and was formally excommunicated on February 6, 1776.

By this time his formal military career had begun as he had been commissioned a Captain in the Fourth Pennsylvania Regiment. The regiment, led by Colonel Anthony Wayne, headed north to invade Canada. The entire campaign, which included General Sullivan's and General Benedict Arnold's forces, was a complete disaster. In November of 1776 John returned home to Wrightstown and resigned his commission. His dealings with Wayne had simply reached an impasse.

His return to public life was short-lived, however, as he was commissioned to lead county efforts to recruit state militiamen on March 22, 1777. Less than two months later John Lacey was appointed Lieutenant Colonel of his local militia. In October 1777 he fought as a volunteer at Germantown and later commanded a regiment which fought off the enemy for several days at Whitemarsh.

Lacey continued to participate in vital campaigns around Philadelphia and on January 9, 1778 he was promoted to Brigadier General, and at twenty-five years old the youngest general officer in the entire Continental Army. Following several close-calls with defeat and capture, General Lacey's field command wound down. In June 1778 he returned to his lieutenant duties in Bucks County and continued to harass the British in and around Philadelphia.

In the autumn of 1778 he was elected to the State Assembly, thus beginning his political career. However, in September of 1781 he was fully engaged again and ready to raise a militia to once again repel British advances. With the surrender at Yorktown the following month his service ended. He married Anastatia Reynolds in January of 1782 and moved to New Jersey to spend the remainder of his life.

While Owen Biddle had relented and sought reinstatement back into the Quaker fold, John Lacey never made any such attempts, nor did he ever formally join the Free Quaker movement. Biddle came from a wealthy family while Lacey prospered following the war, coinciding with his rising social status and business interests as an iron merchant. What they did share in common was an exceptional devotion to liberty, two men willing to serve their country despite personal conscientious dilemmas posed by their pacifist Quaker faith.

# DIGGING HISTORY

JULY 2018

THE MAGAZINE



**Declaring  
INDEPENDENCE:**  
May 20, 1775 or July 4, 1776?

**Drawing the Line:**  
**Quakers in Conscientious Crisis**

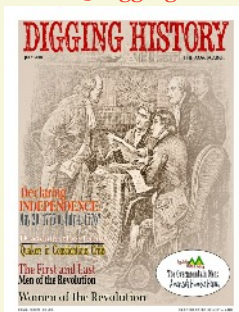
**The First and Last  
Men of the Revolution**

**(Feisty) Women of the Revolution**
















# DIGGING HISTORY

A monthly publication of Digging History Media  
Web Site: [www.digginghistorymag.com](http://www.digginghistorymag.com)  
Contact Us: [seh@digginghistorymag.com](mailto:seh@digginghistorymag.com)



ON THE COVER:  
Contemplating Independence

## IN THIS ISSUE

- |   |   |    |
|---|---|----|
|    | DECLARING INDEPENDENCE: May 20, 1775 or July 4, 1776?                                       | 1  |
|    | RADICAL PRESBYTERIANISM: Seeds of Revolution?   | 8  |
|   | The FIRST and LAST Men of the REVOLUTION  | 11 |
|  | FEISTY FEMALES: Women of the Revolution   | 26 |
|  | APPALACHIAN HISTORIES & MYSTERIES: The Overmountain Men, America's Humble Heroes            | 29 |
|  | DRAWING THE LINE: Quakers in Conscientious Crisis   | 35 |
|  | BOOK CORNER: May I Recommend . . .  | 39 |
|  | FAMILY HISTORY TOOLBOX: Essential tools, tips and resources every family historian can use  | 41 |
|  | <b>Genealogical Head-Scratcher</b><br>Was This Man Really 106 (or 109 or 114) When He Died? | 43 |
|  | <b>July 4, 1876: It Was a Blast!</b>  | 47 |
|  | Nineteenth Century Rainmaking: Part II (The Rain Wizard)                                    | 51 |
|  | THE DASH: Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego Pierson  | 56 |
|  | BIBLIOGRAPHY and Photo Credits  | 60 |