

Men and Events of the Revolution
in
Winchester and Frederick County
Virginia

VOLUME IX - BICENTENNIAL ISSUE OF THE
WINCHESTER-FREDERICK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY PAPERS

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE

Garland R. Quarles, Chairman
Lewis N. Barton
Stewart Bell, Jr.
James V. Hutton, Jr.
George M. Smith

Winchester, Virginia
1975

America, that may be the immediate victims of tyranny, in promoting all proper measures to avert such dreadful calamities, to procure a redress of our grievances, and to secure our common liberties.

5th. It is the unanimous opinion of this meeting, that a joint resolution of all the Colonies to stop all importations from Great Britain, and exportations to it, till the said Act shall be repealed, will prove the salvation of North America and her liberties. On the other hand, if they continue their imports and exports, there is the greatest reason to fear that fraud, power, and the most odious oppression, will rise triumphant over right, justice, social happiness, and freedom.

6th. That the East India Company, those servile tools of arbitrary power, have justly forfeited the esteem and regard of all honest men; and that the better to manifest our abhorrence of such abject compliance with the will of a venal Ministry, in ministering all in their power an increase of the fund of speculation, we will not purchase tea, or any other kind of East India commodities either imported now, or hereafter to be imported, except salpêtre, spices, and medicinal drugs.

7th. That it is the opinion of this meeting that Committees ought to be appointed for the purpose of effecting a general Association, that the same measures may be pursued through the whole Continent. That the Committees ought to correspond with each other, and to meet at such places and times as shall be agreed on, in order to form such General Association, and that when the same shall be formed and agreed on by the several Committees, we will strictly adhere thereto; and till the general sense of the Continent shall be known, we do pledge ourselves to each other and our country, that we will invariably adhere to the votes of this day.

8th. That Charles M. Thruston, Isaac Zane, Angus McDonald, Samuel Beall, 3d, Alexander White, and George Rootes, be appointed a Committee for the purposes aforesaid; and that they, or any three of them are hereby fully empowered to act.

Which being read, were unanimously assented to and subscribed.

Footnotes to Frederick County Resolves

1. (Williamsburg) *Virginia Gazette*, June 18, 1774. Reports that Mr. Paul Riviere (sic) of Boston had suggested that the Philadelphia Committee adopt a general non-importation and exportation and agreement in support of Boston. Philadelphia prefers to call a general meeting reserving the boycott as "a last recourse".
2. *New York Journal or General Advertiser*, No. 1642.
3. Force, Peter, ed. *American Archives*, Vol. 4, Series 1, 392-393. The Force manuscripts, from which the *American Archives* were compiled, are in the Library of Congress and show that Force got his information on the Frederick Resolves from the *New York Journal* article previously cited.
4. In addition to Muhlenberg the Shenandoah (then Dunmore) County committee was composed of Francis Slaughter, Abraham Bird, Taverner Beale, John Tipton, and Abraham Bowman. See (Williamsburg) *Virginia Gazette*, no. 430, August 4, 1774.

Biographical Sketches Of Selected Revolutionary War Era Personalities From The Winchester Area

by J. Dallas Robertson, Ph. D.
Associate Prof. of History, Shenandoah College

The sketches presented here deal with certain men associated with this area who made important contributions to the revolutionary cause, yet their contributions have largely escaped the notice of historians. The selections were made by the Publication Committee of the Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society.

The intent of the sketches has been to place these area personalities in the larger context of the American Revolution. Readers who are especially interested in genealogy or local history should consult the footnotes for possible sources of additional information. In some cases reliable source materials were so limited that the sketches are necessarily very brief.

James Wood, Jr.

James Wood, Jr., the son of the founder of Winchester, was born in Frederick County, Virginia, on January 28, 1741. His father was the County Lieutenant and held various important judicial and military offices. James Wood, Sr., accompanied Washington in the ill fared reconnaissance mission against the French in the Ohio River Valley area in 1754, and left an interesting account of the expedition in his notebook.¹ It has been speculated that James Wood, Jr., accompanied his father on this campaign, but that is unlikely, since he was but thirteen years of age at the time, and there is no mention of him in the notebook.

His father died in 1759, and on February 5, 1760, James Wood, Jr., was sworn in as Deputy Clerk of the Court. He had just turned 19 years of age. He was also elected the Clerk of the Vestry of Frederick Parish (1764).² From 1766 until 1775 he was the representative from Frederick County to the Virginia House of Burgesses.³

During Lord Dunmore's War against the Indians, James Wood commanded an infantry company. Having furnished many of the company rifles at his own expense, he petitioned the Virginia Convention on December 23, 1775, for reimbursement and was awarded 28 pounds, 11 shillings.⁴

Noting that James Wood had been sent at the direction of the House of Burgesses in 1774 to negotiate a peace with the Indians, and stop their British-incident attacks on the frontier settlers, the Convention voted that James Wood be paid an additional 250 pounds "for the great service he hath done this colony". The Convention noted that at great personal risk James Wood had secured the Indian treaty "whereby peace and safety was restored to this colony".⁵

The Virginia Convention of 1776 appointed James Wood one of the Commissioners authorized to sell or rent the property which Lord Dunmore owned in Berkeley County.⁶ Lord Dunmore, the British Governor of Virginia, had left Virginia and joined the British Fleet off New York.⁷

James Wood was the Lieutenant Colonel of the Frederick County Militia, and no doubt he attempted on his return to bring the Militia up to the standards laid down by the Convention. The Militia was considerably below strength, numbering perhaps fewer than 900 men.⁸

On February 4, 1777, James Wood resigned his militia office to accept a commission from the Continental Congress as Colonel of the 12th Virginia Regiment, Continental Line. Raising his regiment as rapidly as he could, Colonel Wood led his troops northward in the spring to reinforce Washington's army near Morristown, New Jersey. On July 20, 1777, he wrote his wife, Jean, that "the tents are now struck and the men paraded to march off without anyone knowing whether to the North or the South."⁹ The confusion was occasioned by the intelligence that the main British army under General William Howe was shipping out of New York and Washington did not know its destination.¹⁰

Howe's army disembarked at Head of Elk, the northernmost landing on the Chesapeake Bay, on August 25, and began to move toward Philadelphia. At Brandywine Creek on September 11, 1777, the American troops rushing south, and the British moving slowly northward, collided. The Americans formed on a ridge with the divisions of Stirling, Stephens (to which Wood's regiment was attached) and Sullivan opposing this British attack. The first British assault scattered Sullivan's division, leaving Stirling and Stephen's divisions to hold the oncoming British, who out-numbered the Americans two to one. The fighting was very heavy, and often hand to hand, before the Americans were forced to withdraw.¹¹ Colonel Wood was cited for his "conspicuous gallantry" at Brandywine.¹²

The American army having been unable to stop the British advance, the way to Philadelphia lay open. "The General (Washington) has given up all thoughts of saving Philadelphia," wrote James Wood, "The enemy has passed us and are, I dare say, before this time in possession of it. We have had several skirmishes since the battle of the 11th (Brandywine) in all of which we have been worsted."¹³

Washington determined to try one more time, however, and directed a concerted attack by his exhausted forces against the British camp at Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia. The battle (October 4, 1777) may best be described as a draw, with heavy losses on both sides. "Our loss at the last battle (Germantown) is computed at one thousand, that of the enemy much more. It was a busy day. I think much warmer than the last . . ." commented James Wood. He was writing home to reassure his wife that he was all right,

because it had been reported that he was missing in action. He added: "General Stephen has mentioned me with great respect to the commander in chief as the last Regiment who left the field."¹⁴ After some sharp but inconclusive skirmishes along the Delaware, the British settled down in Philadelphia, while the remnants of Washington's army endured the hard winter of 1777-1778 at Valley Forge.

The following spring and summer there were a number of engagements involving Wood's regiment in New Jersey and New York. By the fall of 1778 there were widespread rumors that the British were about to give up the American campaign, and James Wood tried to tender his resignation, but Washington refused to accept it.¹⁵ In September, 1778, Wood was elected by the officers of the Virginia Line to represent them in the General Assembly meeting at Williamsburg.¹⁶ James Wood was instructed by General Washington to do all in his power to get the Virginia legislature to bring the state's regiments up to their full strength. Wood's wife, Jean, met him at Williamsburg, but being in a poor state of health after the recent death of their little daughter, she returned to Winchester before the Colonel left Williamsburg to rejoin his regiment at Middlebrook, New Jersey.¹⁷

The next summer (1779) Wood's regiment was stationed at Paramus, New Jersey.¹⁸ A successful attack was launched from this base against the British encampment at Paulus Hook in August.¹⁹ After the summer engagements in the north, James Wood returned to Winchester in October or November, 1779, for a brief leave before assuming his next command.²⁰

In the winter of 1779 or spring of 1780, James Wood was appointed to take charge of the Convention troops consisting principally of Hessian and British soldiers captured at Saratoga, then being held in the vicinity of Charlottesville, Virginia.²¹ The increased activity of the British under Cornwallis in North Carolina persuaded the American authorities to move the Hessians to Winchester and the British prisoners farther north for possible exchange. Colonel Wood had the active support of Governor Thomas Jefferson, who kept him advised of the movements of Cornwallis, and who aided him in supplying the needs of the prisoners.²² In 1781 and 1782 Wood was in charge of all prisoners of war detained in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. His humane treatment and deep concern for the well-being of the Convention troops won him the praise of the prisoners of war as well as Congress.²³

In 1782 the Continental Congress resolved to effect a general reorganization of the Army, permitting some officers to resign, promoting others, and consolidating regiments. James Wood was appointed President of the board charged with the arrangement of the Virginia Line. He accomplished this difficult task in January, 1783, and forwarded his recommendations to the Congress.²⁴

A treaty of peace having at last been concluded with Great Britain, James

Wood returned to Virginia to resume an active role in the leadership of his native state. He was commissioned a brigadier general of the state troops in 1783 and directed a campaign against the Indians who were again harassing the frontier settlements.²⁵

James Wood was an active supporter of the new federal constitution. In July, 1788, his home was the terminus of a grand parade and barbecue in celebration of American independence and Virginia's ratification of the Constitution.²⁶ The following year as one of the Virginia members of the electoral college he cast his vote for his old friend and commander in chief, George Washington, to be the first President of the new nation.²⁷

Since 1784 James Wood had served continuously as a member of the Executive Council of Virginia, and in 1796 the General Assembly elected him Governor of the Commonwealth.²⁸ He served as Governor of Virginia until December, 1799. He remained on the Executive Council until his death.

James Wood was active in the Society of the Cincinnati, the organization of former officers of the Revolutionary War. He served as President of that body from 1802 until his death.²⁹

In the post-Revolution period James Wood and his wife, Jean, maintained a home in Richmond. James Wood died there on June 16, 1813, and was buried with full military honors in historic St. John's churchyard.³⁰ His wife survived him by ten years and was interred in a family burial ground within the bounds of present day Byrd Park, Richmond, Virginia.³¹

Footnotes for James Wood Article

1. *James Wood Notebook*, Xerox copy in the possession of Ben Belchic, President, Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society. For a sketch of his life, drawn from various sources, see the work by Katherine Glass Greene, *Winchester, Virginia, and Its Beginnings, 1743-1814*, Strasburg, Virginia: Shenandoah Publishing House, 1926 (reprint ed., 1973?), p. 133 ff. Referred to hereinafter as Greene.
2. *Frederick Parish Vestry Book*, Photocopy, Possession of Winchester-Frederick County Historical Society, Abram's Delight, Winchester. See also Everard Kidder Meade, *Frederick Parish Virginia, 1744-1780*, Winchester: Pifer Printing Company, Inc., 1947, p. 18. See also J.E. Norris, *History of the Lower Shenandoah Valley*, Berryville, Virginia: Virginia Book Company, 1972 (reprint of 1890 ed.), p. 122. Cited hereinafter as Norris.
3. A list of the Burgesses from Frederick County is available in Appendix No. 1, p. 511, of T.K. Cartmell, *Shenandoah Valley Pioneers and Their Descendants*, Berryville, Virginia: Chesapeake Book Company, 1963. Cited hereinafter as Cartmell.
4. *Proceedings of the Convention of Delegates in Richmond, May-December, 1775; Williamsburg, Dec. 1-May, 1776*, (Reprint 1816) p. 75; 82. Cited hereinafter as *Virginia Convention, 1775-76*.
5. *Virginia Convention, 1775-76*, p. 86, (5 January 1776).
6. *Virginia Convention, 1775-76*, p. 51, (1776).

7. Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, ed. John Richard Alden. New York: The Macmillan Company, Volume II, p. 849. Cited hereinafter as Ward.
8. Norris, p. 136, says that in 1777 there were only 923 effective militia in Frederick County.
9. Norris, p. 136; his commission is reproduced in Greene, p. 349. I have depended heavily on Greene for the letters printed there and not otherwise available. For the letter of J.W. to his wife on 20 July 1777, see Greene, p. 250.

10. Ward, I, 328ff.
11. Ward, I, 351ff.
12. Greene, p. 139.
13. Letter of J.W. to his wife, Jean, 26 September 1777 in Greene, p. 350.
14. See Letter of J.W. to his wife of 10 October, 1777, and 14 October, 1777 in Green, pp. 253-255.
15. Letter of J.W. to his wife, 28 September 1778 (West Point, N.Y.) Greene, p. 259.
16. Greene, p. 259.
17. Letter of J.W. to unidentified friend from Williamsburg, 6 November 1778, in Greene, p. 260.
18. Letter of J.W. to Robert Wood, dateline 4 October 1779, Paramus, New Jersey, in Greene, p. 261.
19. Ward, II, 604ff.
20. Letter to Robert Wood, 4 October 1779, in Greene, p. 261.
21. The actual date of his taking charge of the Convention troops is difficult to establish. A letter of Brigadier-General J.W. Specht, who had commanded the First (Brunswick) Brigade under Burgoyne, to James Wood under dateline of Staunton, March 8, 1780, indicates that Colonel Wood took command in 1780. The opening paragraph of Specht's letter is as follows:
"Sir,

With a great deal of pleasure I have heard that the command of the troops of Convention which was in Colo. Bland's hands and vacant since several months is devolved upon you." (letter in Greene, p. 188).

There appear to be no extant letters of Wood's prior to the fall of 1779 in which he refers to the Convention troops, and none prior to 1780 in which he indicates any responsibility for them.

22. See letters to and from Jefferson in Greene, p. 189ff.
23. See Letter to James Wood from Baron von Riedesel, regimental commander of Brunswick Infantrymen, 19 March 1781, in Greene, p. 191.
24. See the various documents pertaining to this in Greene, p. 240ff.
25. Greene, p. 140.
26. *Winchester Centinel* 9 July 1788, in Norris, p. 163.
27. See James Wood's report of the voting in Greene, pp. 247-248.
28. Cartmell, Appendix 2, p. 515.
29. Katherine Glass Greene and William Wood Glass, II, *Brigadier-General and Governor James Wood, Jr., and the Society of the Cincinnati in the State of Virginia*, Winchester: Pifer Printing Company, 1926, passim.
30. Greene, p. 281 (obituary notice from *Richmond Enquirer*).
31. Greene, p. 282-283.

Charles Mynn Thruston

At noon we arrived at Winchester and were quartered in several inns. . . . There is an English church here, but there has been no service for a long time. Mr. Thruston, the shepherd of this congregation, has taken up the sword . . . I

These words, recorded by a Hessian prisoner of war on September 7, 1777, introduce us to Charles Mynn Thruston, the colorful rector of Frederick