A HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
MILITIA THROUGH 1783

APPROVED:

[Signatures of Major Professor, Minor Professor, Director of the Department of History, Dean of the Graduate School]

The history of the development of a provincial military force in Pennsylvania is an example of the effects of numerous conflicting ideas that existed in every colony and state up to and through the American Revolution. In Pennsylvania the attitude about a militia evolved from almost total opposition through a period of general support but suppression by a pacifist minority controlling the government and finally through a rise and decline based on the necessities of the War for Independence. This study is an effort to trace the growth and value of the Pennsylvania militia through its various structural arrangements and military actions.

This material is presented in five chapters. The first chapter deals exclusively with the several successive attempts to establish a permanent militia in the pre-revolutionary period of Pennsylvania's history. Benjamin Franklin's Association in the 1740's was the most successful effort. Chapter II, "Growth of a War-Time Militia in Pennsylvania," discusses the rise of militarism in the colony in 1774 and 1775. With the source of governmental authority in question the province's radical leadership created a voluntary militia
following the clash between the British regulars and Massachusetts citizens at Lexington. Chapter III, "The Pennsylvania Rifle and Musket Battalions," covers the state's efforts to create a permanent, full-time professional army and the virtual destruction of that army at Long Island. Chapter IV, "The Associated Battalions," follows the continuing attempts to develop a part-time, citizen-soldier army. The final chapter, "Conclusion: The Decline of the Pennsylvania State Military Forces," is a brief summation of the events which led to a general dissolution of militia forces in Pennsylvania. The emphasis on developing a regular Continental Army contributed most heavily to the decline of state militias.

A wealth of primary source material is contained in the several series of the Pennsylvania Archives. The Pennsylvania Archives, First Series (edited by Samuel Hazard), contains miscellaneous records of the numerous boards and commissions established during the colonial and revolutionary period. The Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series (edited by Thomas B. Linn and William H. Egle), is an invaluable source of muster rolls and other documents relating to the militia. The Pennsylvania Archives, Fourth Series (edited by George E. Reed), and Pennsylvania Archives, Eighth Series (edited by Gertrude MacKinney), contain collections of the Governor's papers and the resolves of
of the General Assembly respectively. The Pennsylvania Colonial Records (edited by Samuel Hazard), is a massive collection of papers and correspondence relating to the period. William Gordon, The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment, of the Independence of the United States of America, is a particularly good primary source of the military events during the American Revolution.

Good background material may be found in Wayland F. Dunaway, A History of Pennsylvania, and much important although poorly documented information is contained in Thomas J. Scharf, History of Philadelphia.

This study concludes that for all the problems of raising a militia in Pennsylvania and regardless of the generally poor quality of the militiaman, the value of these organizations outweighed their liabilities. As the Revolutionary War progressed and the Continental Army developed, interest in the state militia declined.

In the early years of the war the state militias provided the manpower essential to the revolutionary movement. Later the Continental Army benefited from a number of experienced troops and excellent officers such as Thomas Proctor and Walter Stewart, who developed their skills in the Pennsylvania militia.
A HISTORY OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
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CHAPTER I

MILITIA IN COLONIAL PENNSYLVANIA

The term "militia" as used in colonial records and most other references to this period is often a misnomer. In Pennsylvania, as in other colonies, there existed several forms of military organizations which may be identified according to geographic location or by their sources of support and responsibilities. In order to better understand the nature of these groups and the influences surrounding them, they may be fairly broken down into four general styles.

Those styled the militia in a strict sense were those legally constituted as such, and they were supported with appropriated funds raised by acts of the Assembly and approved by the Governor. The associators were voluntary organizations during the pre-revolutionary war era and were relatively well organized at times. The most notable example of these voluntary organizations was Benjamin Franklin's Association, which was raised during King George's War. Funds for this novel and most interesting army came from lotteries. The rangers were little more than unruly mobs raised locally on the frontier, much like voluntary fire companies, as a means for immediate response to local
dangers. The Paxton Boys, who marched on Philadelphia in December of 1763, demanding more political representation in the provincial government, were an example of this brand of militia. In the more civilized areas of the Atlantic coast groups less inclined to violence because of their environment banded into self-styled minutemen organizations. Both the rangers and the minutemen were self-supporting and independent of governmental control.1

Although this study does not attempt to examine the colony's political situation, it is impossible to entirely separate the military history from this influence. One of the major issues that passed between the Pennsylvania Assembly and the Governor and his Council revolved around the development of a militia. At various times throughout the colonial period the Crown, the Governor and Council, merchant groups and western settlers all made demands on the Assembly to provide funds for a defense force. Generally the Assembly was able to resist these pressures. The history of this intermittent political battle has been well documented in numerous works.2

1The terms rangers, associators, and minutemen, used to describe "unofficial militias", have been used rather inconsistently by numerous authors and are presented here as this writer's personal interpretation. Benjamin Franklin's Association, formed in the 1740's, is the only one of these that is usually correctly styled. Most often "militia" is applied to each of these forms.

2For example see Robert L. D. Davidson, War Comes to Quaker Pennsylvania, 1682-1756 (New York, 1957).
A legal basis for a militia existed in the original Charter of Pennsylvania. This document, signed by Charles II and proclaimed in April of 1681, contained the following section:

Section XVI And, because in so remote a Country, and situate near many barbarous Nations, the Incursions as well of the Savages themselves, as of other Enemies, Pirates and Robbers, may probably be feared; Therefore We have given, and for Us, Our Heirs and Successors, do give Power by these Presents to the said William Penn, his Heirs and Assigns, by themselves, or their Captains, or other their Officers, to Levy, Muster and Train all Sorts of Men, of what Condition soever, or wheresoever born, in the said Province of Pennsylvania for the Time being, and to make War, and to pursue the Enemies and Robbers aforesaid, as well by Sea as by Land, even without the Limits of said Province and by God's Assistance to Vanquish and take them, and being taken put them to Death by the Law of War, or to save them at their Pleasure, and to do all and every other Thing which unto the Charge and Office of a Captain-General of an Army belong, or hath accustomed to belong, as fully and freely as any Captain-General of an Army hath ever had the same.3

Clearly the desirability of and probably need for a militia were anticipated in this wording. Furthermore, William Penn, recipient of the Charter, a leading Quaker and pacifist, probably wrote this section himself.4


The Charter also provided Penn with the power to appoint deputies to govern the colony in his absence. While the Penn family maintained their Charter up to the eve of the revolution, except for a brief period at the end of the seventeenth century, duties of governing the colonies were usually delegated to one of these deputies. These representatives of the proprietors officed under various titles, but were most often referred to as "Governor." \(^5\)

In 1702 Penn issued a constitutional document which came to be known as the "Charter of Privileges," which gave extraordinary powers to the Assembly. This constitution established the Assembly as a popularly elected unicameral legislative body. The Council, which was originally the upper house in a bicameral legislature, was shorn of all powers except that of advisor to the Governor. The Assembly also obtained the right of self-adjournment, something that was even beyond the powers of the House of Commons in England. \(^6\) This and the fact that the Penn family appointed governors who were often of a

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\(^5\) These titles include Lt. Governor, Deputy Governor and President. Herein all will be styled Governor when serving in that official capacity.

militaristic background, or at least non-pacifist by nature, set up the pattern of political clashes over the militia that was characteristic of the pre-revolution period.  

One other factor for consideration is the ethnic make-up of the colony. Although Pennsylvania came into being as a haven for the Quakers, the numerical balance of the population rapidly shifted away from this group. Numerous estimates of the numbers in each ethnic group have been advanced over the intervening years. For the purposes of this study it is enough to say that by 1730 and probably earlier, the Quakers (Welch, Dutch, and English) were in a minority position. The 1720's were years that great waves of Scotch-Irish and German immigrants rolled over the Pennsylvania countryside. The Germans settled a second tier of counties to the west and the Scotch-Irish founded their homes on the frontier. The significance of this geographic settlement pattern lies in the attitudes of each group concerning military affairs. The Quakers were generally supported in their pacific policies by the Germans as

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9Ibid., pp. 76, 82, 87.
long as there was little trouble in their settlement area. The Scotch-Irish, however, faced the dangers of the frontier and reacted to their situation in a manner typical of their background. "Their religion was a harsh Calvinism [emphasizing such instruction as] Deuteronomy 7:2: 'And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them'." It should be noted that these settlement patterns and attitudes remained rather consistent throughout the colonial period and may be recognized to some degree as of this date.

Considerable pressure to create a militia came early in the colony's history. The great powers of Europe seldom prosecuted their wars on both sides of the Atlantic. The colonials were too far removed, too loosely organized, and too concerned with the day-to-day problems of basic survival. Yet there was enough agitation by the rivals to cause some concern. The proprietors of Pennsylvania were constantly reminded that they must share the burden of raising troops and providing money for their own protection. Thus it was that the not too distant threat of the French to the north caused the English Crown and the Governor to call for measures to aid New York during King William's War. Queen Mary wrote

10Davidson, Quaker Pennsylvania, p. 7.
Governor Benjamin Fletcher in 1692, authorizing him to command the Pennsylvania Assembly to raise troops or money to aid in the cause against the French in the Hudson Valley.  

Fletcher was governor of both New York and Pennsylvania during the years of 1692 through 1694, the period when Penn temporarily lost his Charter. Fletcher was most anxious to give aid to his home colony but found little comfort in the acts of the Pennsylvania Assembly. A bill to appropriate money to organize a militia unit was introduced in the House and was defeated on the third reading. However, after considerable agitation on the part of the governor, the Assembly passed a bill granting £760 for supplies. 

This action was followed by the restoration of Penn's Charter in the fall of 1694. At that time the Crown stipulated that the proprietor must provide for the defense of his colony. The available evidence shows no inclination on the part of the Assembly to provide funds for such an enterprise in the years immediately following this restoration. By late 1697 the war was settled and the Treaty of Ryswick concluded. Pennsylvania was untouched by the fighting and the pacifist principles of the Assembly proved useful. The colony escaped with little expense and no bloodshed.

\[11\text{Votes of the House, I, 129.}\]
\[12\text{Ibid., p. 148.}\]
\[13\text{Ibid., p. 151; Dunaway, History of Pennsylvania, pp. 54-55.}\]
A renewal of hostilities in the north came during Queen Anne's War in 1702. In Europe, England struggled to destroy a French-Spanish alliance and in the colonies, New England attacked the Acadians. By this time Penn had issued the Charter of Privileges and the Assembly was more powerful than ever. Governor Andrew Hamilton (1701-1703) ran head-on into Assembly opposition when, upon the proprietors' request, he urged them to establish a militia. In a forceful letter to the representatives, he claimed the greatest of dangers faced their neighbors in New York and, "seeing we are Embarqu'd with them in ye same Bottom . . . ," Pennsylvania was obligated to share in their defense. He further stated that there were those whose religious scruples demanded that they bear arms. These militants, said Hamilton, were only asking the same rights of conscience that the pacifists possess. Curiously Hamilton emphasized a militia in law in this letter, which indicates there may have been some sort of extra-legal voluntary militia in existence at the time.

By 1704 a somewhat formalized militia was in existence in Pennsylvania. Although there was still no colony-wide militia system and no support from the Assembly, there is plenty of evidence that several units were organized. There

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were local "watch and ward" laws which provided night watchmen whose primary function was to spread fire alarms. The mayor of Philadelphia, Anthony Morris, complained to Governor John Evans (1704-1709) that the local militiamen were claiming exemptions from these watches. As the other townsmen were complaining about these exemptions, so were the militia captains complaining that enlistees were failing to show up for muster because of the watches. Because of lack of authority, the Governor declared the parties on both sides would simply have to work out a solution for themselves. This conflict was again pressed on the Governor later in the year, but the issue seemed to fade with the election of Griffith Jones to the post of mayor, possibly because of his background as a member of the Assembly.

Governor Evans took a dramatic step towards getting the Assembly to fund the establishment of a militia. Evans first tried to raise an army by proclamation, which failed when the Assembly ignored its fund-raising responsibility. Not a quitter, he had a fake message sent to himself from New Castle County stating that French ships were raiding the coast and

15 PCR, II, 151-152.
16 Ibid., pp. 161-162.
moving on Philadelphia. When the "message" arrived, he put on a great show, riding through the city streets brandishing his sword and calling the people to arms. This act was met with general indifference among the Quaker men, although a number of women dumped their valuables into wells and fled the city. The result of this farce was that Evans lost credibility and the pacifist position was strengthened in the Assembly. Furthermore, the militia that did exist, whether voluntary or paid from the Governor's or the proprietor's pocket, seem to have faded away shortly after this incident.

In 1710 Penn intervened in the unremitting struggle between the Assembly and Governor and threatened to return the colony to the Crown if some sort of political peace was not concluded. This brought a new and more favorable Assembly into office after the elections of that year. Although no militia bill was passed, the new legislators voted £500 for the Queen's use, and this appears to have resolved the issue.

18 Ibid.
20 Votes of the House, I, 774.
21 Thayer, Democracy, p. 10; Dunaway, History of Pennsylvania, p. 67.
The Peace of Utrecht in 1713 heralded an era of good feeling in Pennsylvania politics. For a period of about twenty-seven years, no great dispute over military affairs occurred between the governing branches in Pennsylvania. No military action transpired to put pressure on the relationship between the pacifists and those not so passive. The Assembly treated with and voted generous gifts to the neighboring Indians and enjoyed a good relationship in return. No militia bill seems to have been considered by the Assembly. However, there probably was, during the most part of this period, some form of militia in the colony. The proprietor gently reminded Governor William Keith (1717-1726) that it would be a good idea to try to establish a militia. Penn insisted that there was to be no conflict over the issue and that the rights of the Quakers be respected. Keith somehow, probably by using his own funds, managed to comply with Penn's request, as a few records indicate. In 1723 the *American Weekly Mercury* described the occasion of a celebration of George I's birthday in Philadelphia: "... a round of the guns of the garrison was fired, and was answered by the vessels in the Road, the

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22PCR, III, 63-64.
soldiers [who, with the officers in new cloths made a handsome appearance] fired three volleys, as did our militia, who were under arms . . . "23

This era of good feeling ended soon after the onset of King George's War (1740-1748). The death of Emperor Charles VI set off a new power struggle in Europe. By 1744 France and Spain were joined once more against England. There was little conflict in the colonies but rumors of French and Indian plots were widespread. What action that did take place transpired in the north once again. The primary battle in North America occurred at Port Louisbourg, which was captured by a joint effort of New Englanders and the British fleet in 1745.

In Pennsylvania the Quaker Assembly members saw little cause for concern. Early in 1745 Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts wrote Governor George Thomas (1738-1746) asking for aid in the expedition against Louisbourg. Assemblyman Joseph Trotter, speaking for his colleagues, said that since Pennsylvania had not raised troops before and was not threatened at the moment, there was no cause to get involved.24 Later in the year reports that Indians on the frontier were preparing for attacks came to the Governor


from Lancaster County, and the Governor again urged the Assembly to send aid. Again there was no favorable response forthcoming and Thomas was unable to do anything more than to urge the voluntary militias in Lancaster County to prepare themselves for the worst.25

It was about this time that Benjamin Franklin, the Philadelphia printer, became personally concerned over the situation. Franklin, in a letter to his brother John, inquired about the status of the siege of Louisbourg. An indication of his attitude, which would soon affect Pennsylvania's stand on defense, is included therein. Mentioning that the thousands of prayers from his colony were pitted against the prayers of a few priests within the fort, he speculated that in all probability "works" rather than "faith" would insure success in the battle.26

Franklin watched the events of the next two years impatiently. On the King's order, Pennsylvania raised four companies of militia, about 400 men, for a joint colonial and regular expedition to reduce Canada.27 These troops were raised at the Governor's order and sent to Albany, where they

25PCR, V, 1-2.
26Franklin Papers, III, 26-27.
27PCR, V, 37.
remained inactive for about a year until they were discharged in October of 1747. The entire effort was a fiasco in the eyes of the Pennsylvania Assembly. The troops had been idle for a year before the Crown called off the plan for taking Canada. The Governor urged the Assembly as well as the government of New York to provide supplies for his four companies. For the most part, these Pennsylvania troops went unsupported, lacking food, clothing, and blankets.

During the spring and summer of 1747 several Spanish and French privateers were seen in the Delaware Bay area. A French ship actually landed at Bombay Hook in New Castle County and raided two plantations, seizing among other items several slaves. To all but the Quakers it seemed that something had to be done. Franklin, with the open support of Governor Anthony Palmer (1747-1748), decided to take matters into his own hands. His famous pamphlet, "Plain Truth," shocked the people of the colony of Pennsylvania into action. He told his mesmerized readers that theirs was the only colony without defenses, and then proceeded to describe

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29 Franklin Papers, III, 92, 232-233; PCR, V, 52, 56, 134-145.
30 PCR, V, 89.
the inevitable results of their inaction. The paper was a masterpiece of propaganda which exploited the fears of the religious, merchants, and the weak. With no organized defense:

"... on the first Alarm, Terror will spread over All... very many will seek Safety by a speedy Flight. [The rich] will flee, thro' Fear of Torture, to make them produce more than they are able. [A man with wife and children] will find them hanging on his Neck, beseeching him with Tears to quit the City... All will run into Confusion, amidst Cries and Lamentations... Sacking the City will be the first, and burning it, in all Probability, the last Act of the Enemy."31

The pamphlet ended with a promise that the author would present a plan for the colony's defense within a few days.

Within a week the proposed plan was on paper. The text stated that the people, being without support from their home government and overlooked by a mother country already heavily burdened, should subscribe to prepare for their own needs. Franklin wrote: "... it is become too well known to our Enemies, that this Colony is in a naked, defenceless State, without Fortifications or Militia of any sort..."32 The paper went further in outlining such organizational details as the size of the companies (50 to 100 men), date of the companies' first official meetings (January 1, 1748), and numbers and ranks of officers. Each county was instructed to

31 Franklin Papers, III, 197-198. ("Plain Truth" is reproduced in Ibid., pp. 188-204.)

32 Ibid., p. 205.
elect four deputies. The elected deputies from the entire colony would form the General Military Council, which would direct the details of training and generally coordinate the whole of the militia. Finally, it was stipulated that no members of the Association would be subjected to fines or corporal punishment and that the organization would remain effective until the King commanded otherwise, or a superior force became effective or peace came between Britain, France, and Spain.33

The results of Franklin's effort were both astounding and immediate. By the first of January there were possibly as many as 10,000 men throughout the colony, including 800 to 1,200 in Philadelphia alone, who joined the associators.34 Agreements were concluded between companies in various locations that promised aid and support in local emergencies. Meetings and drills were held regularly. By April of 1748 the city troops of Philadelphia were sufficiently prepared and held a mass (1,000 men) public drill. This event occasioned much interest and drew large crowds, including representatives of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederation.35

33Ibid., pp. 206-208.
34Ibid., pp. 268-269; Davidson, Quaker Pennsylvania, p. 52; PGR, V, passim.
35Franklin Papers, III, 285n.
On the day of the drills the companies mustered outside the city and were there reviewed by Governor Palmer and the Council. The appearance of the troops is a subject for speculation. Presumably they were, in the main, dressed in hunting attire, but it should be noted that many of the community's "dandies" and leading businessmen were among the associators. Franklin had provided mottos and flag designs for the companies, and it may be fairly assumed that the proud wives and mothers had seen to it that these were fluttering at the head of their respective companies. If these men were armed according to Franklin's plan, each had a musket and twelve charges of powder and ball. It may be fairly assumed that the streets were lined with onlookers as the massed troops marched into town. Finally the Association fired three volleys and each company marched away toward its own district, and the memorable day's activities ended.

One other aspect of the Association which had some bearing on Pennsylvania's home defenses in later years was the erection of artillery batteries, which were completed in 1748. This was the second step in Franklin's plan. Within


37 Franklin Papers, III, 206.

38 Pennsylvania Gazette, April 16, 1748. (Hereinafter referred to as Pa. Gazette.)
a week of the publication of his "Articles of Association,"
the man who was to become known as "the sage of Philadelphia"
announced his idea for a lottery to raise cash for the purchase
of cannon. The plan, eagerly supported by the Governor and
leading merchants, called for the sale of 10,000 tickets at
£2 each. Of these, £17,000 would be divided between 2,842
lucky ticketholders, with prizes ranging from £3 to £500.
The remaining £3,000 was then to be used to obtain supplies
necessary to advance the completion of the proposed batteries.
Careful preparations were taken to insure a fair drawing and
a board of leading citizens was established to oversee the
handling of the funds raised. Typically, Franklin's project
was a complete and almost instant success.

By the end of April one battery, located at William
Atwood's wharf (at the foot of Society Hill), was completed
and mounted with thirteen cannon. The main battery, known as
"the Association," which had breastworks eight to ten feet
thick, and was located on the southern edge of Philadelphia,
was soon readied. During a two-month period in early 1748,
using money from the lottery, donations from merchants, and
personal influence, Franklin and the Associators procured
fifteen twenty-eight-pound and twenty-four fourteen-pound

39Franklin Papers, III, 223.
Spanish-made cannon from Boston, twelve cannon from England, eighteen "borrowed" cannon from New York, and numerous other unidentifiable weapons.  

In all, the Association was a success, but when the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed ending the conflict, the volunteers of Pennsylvania had seen no action. With the dissolution of the Association at the end of 1748, the fate of the batteries became uncertain. Some private arrangements were presumably taken to maintain the sites. One of the later references to these defense works indicates that they were not closely watched. During the time of the Stamp Act "crisis" in 1765, the big guns at the main battery were discovered to have been spiked, and a brief but intense panic ran through the city.

The raising, training, and dissolution of the Association in 1747 and 1748 occurred without legal action by any part of the government. The Crown, Proprietor, and Assembly had all politely turned their heads. The Governor and Council had openly but unofficially approved and had gone so far as to grant commissions to the officers.

The French and Indian War (1754-1763), however, completely changed military matters in Pennsylvania. While the earlier wars had seemed remote to the Pennsylvanians, this

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40 Ibid., pp. 372-373; Davidson, Quaker Pennsylvania, p. 54; Pa. Gazette, April 28, 1748.
41 Watson, Annals, I, 329.
new confrontation had a direct impact on the colony. This time the trouble occurred on the frontier. The French induced their Indian allies to help maintain control of the frontier areas as the British colonials moved westward in increasing numbers. Pennsylvanians discovered they were deeply involved in a conflict shortly after General Edward Braddock, his British regulars, and American volunteers were defeated by the French and Indians near Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh) in July of 1755. In August numerous petitions for supplies and weapons from the western counties flooded the Governor's office.\textsuperscript{42} The Governor, in turn, pressed the Assembly to pass a militia bill and to supply the desperately needed provisions to the frontiersmen. The Assembly, still dominated by the Quakers far removed from the conflict, pointed to the colony's past record of general peace and refused to consider the measure until late in 1755. In October of that year, several settlers in the Paxton area were murdered by Indians, and although many companies of rangers were raised, they had little in the way of equipment for self-protection.\textsuperscript{43} The Assembly was at this time receiving almost daily demands from the frontier settlements for any sort of relief.

Finally, Governor Robert Morris (1754-1756), using the powers

\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{42} \textsc{for}, VI, 533, 590, \textit{et al.}

\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 659.
granted in the Charter, declared war on the Shawnee and Delaware tribes and placed a price on their scalps. At this, six Quaker Assemblymen, including James Pemberton, the long-time pacifist leader, resigned their offices. Many others refused to stand for re-election, and by the fall of 1756 only twelve of the thirty-six Assembly members were Quakers.

That same year a militia bill passed the Assembly, and for the duration of the colonial era, supplies, money, and men were provided by the legislature whenever needed. The early part of 1756 saw the development of a chain of some two hundred forts constructed on the western frontier. These stretched from the Delaware River along the Kittatinny Hills to the Maryland border, and were funded out of the provincial treasury. The Governor ordered men raised to garrison these forts and in all raised several regiments numbering at least 800 men during this time. In the long run these forts proved to be of little value except as a shelter for refugees on occasion.

For the remainder of the conflict Pennsylvania had little to do except fret. The colonial militia had only two campaigns of any significance. The first was a collection

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46 Votes of the House, V, 4181-4182.
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of 300 men under the command of Colonel John Armstrong, which attacked and destroyed an Indian camp at Kittanning on the Allegheny in the fall of 1756. This action, in addition to Quaker efforts to end the hostilities, brought relative quiet to the area. The second involved an army composed of 7,800 men, British and American, led by General John Forbes, which engaged the French at Fort Duquesne. Some 1,700 of these were militia from Virginia and Maryland commanded by Colonel George Washington, and another 2,700 were Colonel John Armstrong's Pennsylvania Militia. In this instance the Assembly had offered a £5 bounty for each recruit and £100,000 for supplies. By the time Forbes had built his supply road and decided to attack the lightly manned French fort, desertion and rebellion had thinned his troops considerably. The small French force, however, wisely abandoned Fort Duquesne, burning it as they left. When Forbes arrived with his remaining troops his task was to rebuild rather than fight.

Little mention of Pennsylvania's militia can be found during the decades of the 1760's and 1770's until the beginning of the actual rebellion against England. In general the British regulars stationed in the province were supplemented

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49 Ibid., p. 131; Pa. Gazette, December 12, 1758.
by troops recruited locally into the King's service. These combined forces, which were outside the jurisdiction of the provincial government, manned the frontier forts and generally assumed all local military responsibilities.
CHAPTER II

1775: THE BEGINNINGS OF A WAR-TIME MILITIA IN PENNSYLVANIA

During the year 1774 the citizens of Pennsylvania, and especially Philadelphia, became greatly concerned over the growing differences with Great Britain. The political background and local attitudes on the Tea Tax and Coercive Acts are omitted here except in noting the results affecting the province’s military posture. The most visible change was a growing number of New England-style town meetings, which were usually organized by the more radical elements in Pennsylvania society. The moderate and conservative members of the communities were forced to attend these gatherings in order to protect their interests. A provincial convention was organized out of these meetings for the purpose of sending delegates to the upcoming Continental Congress.

This point in time, the summer of 1774, marks a shift in the political base of power in the province. The last Governor and Proprietor, John Penn (1773-1776), lost almost all influence over his colony during this period. By May of 1776, the Assembly officially refused to recognize his authority, and the proprietorship ended.
The intervening years witnessed a shift to more radical control in the Assembly. In effect, the colony was controlled by the Provincial Convention in late 1774, the Committee of Safety appointed by the Assembly in the summer of 1775, and a Council of Safety selected by the Constitutional Convention in 1776. The Council of Safety was relieved of many burdens when the Constitution provided a President and a Supreme Executive Council to administer the state in 1777. By late 1777 the separate branches of government were functioning adequately, and the Council of Safety was dissolved.¹

Prior to 1775 there was no formal militia in the Province of Pennsylvania. Local voluntary groups did exist, but their capabilities were of questionable value. Many of these semi-military organizations were raised in response to the Continental Association agreement, which, in October of 1774, brought the colonies together in an attempt to restrict trade with England, thus creating economic pressures for use in bargaining with the mother country. The associators were required not only to restrict their own trading policies, but also to develop a system for enforcing their embargo on the

¹Papers of the Governors, III, 545-546, 651 gives a brief summary of the events. A detailed discussion of Pennsylvania's internal politics during this period is found in Thayer, Democracy, chapters 12 and 13.
whole of the colonies. Throughout Pennsylvania, companies of associators were raised on an unofficial basis. Even the Quakers responded in some instances, and in at least one case formed their own company, which became known as the "Quaker Blues." John Cadwalader, who later became Colonel of the Third Philadelphia Battalion, raised a company, which, probably because of the aristocratic nature of its membership, was dubbed the "Silk Stockings." The Colonel drilled his troops in his front yard, and at the conclusion of each session served Madeira wine to these genteel warriors.  

However, the real movement toward a militia came in April of 1775, just after the arrival of the news concerning the clash between British regulars and Massachusetts citizens at Lexington. This shocking news gave a boost to the influence of the more revolutionary elements, and on April 25, nearly 8,000 Philadelphia citizens gathered on the grounds of the State House, the colonial capital of the Province. With the radicals in control of the meeting a single resolution was passed, this being a pledge to form an armed association for the purpose of defending their "property.

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3Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 296n.
liberty and lives." Enrollment of the companies began at
once, and it was agreed to raise two troops of light horse,
two companies of artillery, and two companies of riflemen.  

By June of 1775, the Philadelphia Associators had
formed into three battalions. Each battalion was made up
of about 500 men, and had a command staff of a Colonel, a
Lieutenant Colonel, and two Majors. John Dickinson, one of
Pennsylvania's leading citizens, a member of Congress, a
later President of Pennsylvania (1782-1785), and a member
of the Constitutional Convention, was elected Colonel of the
First Battalion. Daniel Roberdeau commanded the Second
Battalion, and John Cadwalader expanded his "Silk Stockings"
into a Third Battalion. On June 22, the three battalions, along
with an artillery company, a troop of light horse, and several
companies of light infantry, rangers, and riflemen, marched
to the Commons in Philadelphia, and were reviewed by the
newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army,
General George Washington. John Adams, who was in the city

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4 Pa. Gazette, April 27, 1775. A series of letters from
Boston and New York describing the incident are included in
this and subsequent issues.

5Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 295; Charles H. Hart, "Colonel
John Nixon," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,
I, number 3 (1877), 193.

6Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 275, 296.

7Pennsylvania Evening Post, June 24, 1775. (Hereinafter
referred to as Pa. Evening Post.)
as a member of Congress, wrote his friend James Warren, stating enthusiastically that the local troops appeared to be an excellent army, completely uniformed, and skillful with their weapons.

In the spring and summer of 1775, Pennsylvania, and in particular Philadelphia, were scenes of frantic activity and much confusion. Leading figures from all parts of the colonies were arriving and departing in connection with the business of the Continental Congress. Letters and newspapers discussing engagements with the British regulars circulated freely. Young and old men were enlisting in the Associated Battalions, and newly formed companies were marching and drilling in all parts of the city and province.

On May 2 Governor Penn sent a message to the Assembly, urging them to be cautious in any actions against the home government. He provided the members with a copy of a resolution from the House of Commons, which he said would bring relief from most of their grievances. The avoidance of the "calamities of a Civil War" should be the first order of business, he lectured them. The Assembly was


quick to respond. The calamities of war were only slightly more desirous than the "utter subversion of the Liberties of America." They would not desert the other colonies in this struggle.

The militant spirit grew rapidly throughout the province. An account of some extra-ordinary activities in Berks County began with this statement: "The aged, as well as the young, daily march out under the banner of liberty, and discover a determined resolution to maintain her cause even until death." The report states that three companies were already well-organized and training daily in Reading and that a fourth company had just formed. This last troop was known as the "Old Man's Company" and was made up of about eighty Germans, all past the age of forty. The organizer was a ninety-seven-year-old veteran of the British regulars, and the drummer, an important member, was a mere eighty-four. With black crepe on their caps as a symbol of mourning over the conflict with their brethren, the "Old Man's Company" was observed drilling vigorously.

A report from Bucks County indicates that numerous companies of associators were drilling there before mid-May.

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10 *PEN*, X, 252-254.
12 *Pa. Evening Post*, June 1, 1775.
13 Ibid.
A Committee had formed and met on May 8, for the purpose of supporting and encouraging the local associators. The one dissenter at the meeting was quickly made to understand the serious nature of his opposition. This report states that "a disciple of those species of creatures called Tories, being formally introduced to a tar barrel, of which he was repeatedly pressed to smell, thought it prudent to take leave abruptly, lest a more intimate acquaintance with it should take place."  

On May 1, a committee met in Lancaster County and pledged themselves to associate and prepare militarily. Companies were formed immediately, and by the war's conclusion a total of eleven battalions were raised in that county. 

In Philadelphia, John Adams wrote, "The Martial Spirit throughout this province is astonishing, it arose all of a Sudden, Since the News of the Battle of Lexington. Quakers and all are carried away with it. Everyday in the Week Sundays not excepted they exercise, in great numbers ... Their officers are made of the People of the first Fortune in the Place ... Uniforms and Regimentals are as thick as Bees. America will soon be in a Condition to defend itself by Land against all Mankind." 

15 Klein, Lancaster County, p. 581.
Entrepreneurs of all intents and capabilities were quick to act following the news of Lexington. One printer advertised for subscribers to fund the reproduction of The Prussian Evolutions, a notable Prussian manual of field training. For a price of twenty shillings the buyer would also receive a copy of a current gunnery manual. John Dickinson was one of the first subscribers. Robert Aitken, a Philadelphia bookseller, announced a less expensive manual entitled Military Instructions for Officers Detached in the Field and had it in his shop by mid-June. Another citizen recognizing a demand for his skills advertised himself as an ex-Prussian soldier and offered personal instruction in "quick firing" and "how to avoid all Confusion in an Engagement." Other advertisements of the day offered muskets, musket balls, rifles, and a variety of other small weapons and supplies.

As for the members of the Associated Battalions, events were under way which eventually put them in a status recognized by the provincial government. The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety was established by the Assembly on June 30, 1775, in response to increasing pressures to centralize the direction of the province's military preparations. The Assembly, in a series of resolves, pledged to support the

18 Ibid., June 15, 1775.
Continental Association, provide the necessary money for raising troops if the province was invaded, and named twenty-five leading citizens to form a Committee of Safety, whose primary duties involved overseeing military affairs. The Committee of Safety was authorized to call out the associators, provide pay and supplies, promote the manufacture of saltpeter, and draw on the treasury.

Benjamin Franklin was elected President, and Robert Morris, the banker, was elected Vice-President of the Committee. Other members included John Dickinson, Daniel Roberdeau, and John Cadwalader, commanders of the first three battalions of Philadelphia Associators. For the first year of the struggle with England, the responsibility of directing Pennsylvania's war efforts rested in the hands of the membership of this Committee.

As might be expected, Congress established a quota of men in each province to be raised for service in the Continental Army, which, in effect, put the regular army in competition with the home defense forces for enlistees. The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety received a first request from Congress on June 14, in which Congress asked them to raise six rifle companies for one-year enlistments. These companies were to be sent immediately to join the army near Boston. On June 22, Pennsylvania was asked for an additional

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20 Papers of the Governors, III, 547-548.
two companies to join the first six for the formation of a battalion.\(^2\) At the same time, Congress saw the need to develop a reserve which could be used in a local crisis or to fill gaps in certain engagements where the Continentals might be spread too thin. Thus, two days after the last request to Pennsylvania, Congress established a committee of seven members, including John Dickinson, and ordered them to "put the Militia of America in a proper state for the defense of America."\(^2\)

The recommendations of the Congressional Committee, following about three weeks study, were forwarded to the appropriate bodies in each of the colonies. In Pennsylvania, the Committee of Safety received the papers on July 18. Congress suggested (a) that all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and fifty years be required to join a regular militia company; (b) that each company be composed of about sixty to seventy privates, one drummer, one fifer, four corporals, four sergeants, one ensign, two lieutenants, and one captain; (c) that companies be combined into battalions or regiments, each staffed with a colonel, lieutenant colonel, two majors, and an adjutant or quartermaster; (d) that one-fourth of the militia-men in each colony be styled "minutemen," and these be especially trained and always prepared to march on.

\(^{21}\text{JCC, II, 89-90, 104.}\

\(^{22}\text{Ibid., p. 106.}\)
a moment's notice, each of these to be eligible for rotation after four months' duty; (e) that each soldier have a good musket, a sword or tomahawk, a twenty-three-round cartridge box, twelve flints, and a knapsack. The suggestions went on to recommend the use of standardized three-and-one-half-foot musket using a one-ounce ball and fitted with a bayonet. The colonies were encouraged to provide ships for the protection of their harbors, and conscientious objectors were to be urged to "contribute" liberally to the relief of the troops.\(^\text{23}\)

Congress also recommended that the Committee of Safety appoint all officers above the rank of captain.\(^\text{24}\) In order to implement this last suggestion, Benjamin Franklin, as President of the Committee, requested that all city and county associations send an enumeration of their officers.\(^\text{25}\)

The articles for regulation of the Associated Battalions were drawn up in August. Franklin, Colonel Anthony Wayne, Colonel Cadwalader, and Colonel Robardeau were appointed as a special subcommittee to handle this chore.\(^\text{26}\) Their first order of business was to establish a system of rank among the officers who presumably, when two or more of the same

\(^{23}\text{Ibid., pp. 187-190; Papers of the Governors, III, 556-558.}\)

\(^{24}\text{Pa. Gazette, August 2, 1775.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Papers of the Governors, III, 548-549.}\)

\(^{26}\text{SCR, X, 295.}\)
rank got together in an official capacity, squabbled over the command. The result was a system based on the geographic location of the officer's command and the seniority of that location's claim to being a part of the province. Thus the Philadelphia city and district officers were placed above others of the same rank. Philadelphia County officers came next, followed by the officers of Bucks County, Chester County, Lancaster County, and so on in the order in which the counties had been established. Within a county, the seniority of officers of the same rank was determined by the date their companies were organized.27

The Committee of Safety adopted a set of rules known as the "Articles for the Regulation of the Military Association of Pennsylvania" on August 19, 1775. Franklin and his subcommittee had outlined thirty-two articles, which when reviewed give something of an indication of the lifestyle of those militiamen. Many of the articles were concerned with offenses committed by the troops which could result in a court-martial. Serious breaches of the rules, such as striking an officer or selling arms or supplies, were tried by a general court-martial composed of thirteen members. Of these, six were officers, and six more were qualified voters elected by the men of the accused's company. The final member was an officer elected by the other twelve members.

27Papers of the Governors, III, 559-561.
A verdict of guilty agreed on by two-thirds of the panel was necessary to hand down a conviction, which could result in a dishonorable discharge. A lesser court-martial, the regimental, dealt with minor offenses such as swearing, disturbing the peace, and drunkeness. A conviction in these cases resulted in a censure or a fine. The Commander-in-Chief, and in some cases the Regimental Colonel, had the power to pardon the convicted.28

Other provisions in the "Articles" allowed the members of the companies to elect officers to replace those who resigned or for some other reason were removed from their positions.29 Associators called to serve with the Continental Army were subject to the rules governing the superior command.30 The pay and fine scale for the troops was not included in these regulations, and there was, as in Franklin's Association of the 1740's, no provision for corporal punishment.

The matter of paying the associators was an issue which was not outlined in the early stages of their existence. Their drills and most of their necessary equipment were paid

28 PC, X, 309-312. (See articles 1-5, 10, 11, 13, 16-18 and 26.)

29 Papers of the Governors, III, 548; Pa. Gazette, August 2, 1775. (As noted only officers below the rank of Captain were elected in this manner.)

20 PC, X, 555.
for out of their own funds. The Pennsylvania Assembly obviously intended that the Associators would be paid when called out under emergency conditions, but it went no further in its proceedings than to establish a ceiling on how much the volunteers could be paid. This limit corresponded with the standard pay of the soldier in service with the Continental Army. On September 25, 1775, the officers of the three Philadelphia Battalions submitted a memorial to the Assembly, which provides evidence that the legislature was not supplying the money necessary to purchase equipment for the troops. The sum of the officers' statement was that private persons had been and were, as of the date of the memorial, keeping the Associated Battalions supplied, and that these funds were now inadequate.

Arming the Associators was another problem not easily solved. There was a general shortage of muskets and little saltpeter for making the charges. General George Washington's papers indicate that this was true throughout the entire colonial military system. Within a month after accepting his position, the Commander-in-Chief was issuing orders on the care and use of the pike as a weapon to be used by the rear ranks. This

31 Votes of the House, VIII, 7245.
32 Ibid., 7258-7259.
was his answer to the question of what to do with the large number of unarmed soldiers filling his growing Continental Army. The Committee of Safety in Pennsylvania recommended a standardized pike for use by the Associators. According to the specifications set forth by the Committee, this weapon, a carryover from ancient European warfare, was to be made of hollow pine and to measure fourteen feet in length including a foot-and-a-half spear. The entire weapon was to weigh between seven and eight pounds. An additional feature of the pike was its ready conversion to a tent pole when setting up camp.\textsuperscript{34} The Continental Army's version of the pike was somewhat shorter and heavier,\textsuperscript{35} and it is probably safe to assume that in most cases the pike found service as a tent pole rather than as a weapon. One doubts that the highly skilled British regular with his dreaded bayonet was deterred by such a clumsy instrument. By the end of 1776 there was little mention of the pike in the military records of Pennsylvania.

A lack of weapons was not the only problem of the day. There was much discontent among the membership of the early Associated Battalions, as indeed there was throughout the entire colonial military system. Officers were unhappy with the Committee of Safety's regulations concerning a method

\textsuperscript{34} Papers of the Governors, III, 564.

\textsuperscript{35} Washington's Writings, III, 357.
for establishing rank. Both officers and privates were aggravated about the lack of supplies and there was constant irritation over the number of conscientious objectors, who were, for the most part, members of Pennsylvania's several pacifist religious sects. The men complained that these objectors should be penalized for their non-association. Estimates vary, but perhaps one-sixth of the province's population were Quakers, Mennonites, Dunkers, Moravians, Swenckfelders, or other sects of a similar nature. In the eyes of many Associators, these people were generally held to be no different than the avowed Tory. An account from York County, a western area, indicates that there were, in September of 1775, 3,349 Associators and about 900 non-associators. To the east, however, the figures were somewhat different. That same month, a survey in Bucks County listed 1,688 men associated and 1,613 objectors. The returns from both of these counties were nearly complete records of the taxable males, and they probably reflect the true diversity of opinion in Pennsylvania at the commencement of the war.


39 PCH, XIV, 336. (In 1770 there were 4,426 taxables in York County and 3,177 taxables in Bucks County.)
Revised and additional regulations for the Associated Battalions were drawn up by the Committee at the year's end. Mention was made therein of the problem of the officers' rank, but no solution to the situation was outlined. The prime concern in this matter revolved around officers of the same rank and from the same location desiring superior status. If their appointments were made at the same time, their relative rank was determined by the drawing of lots. Many "old hands" felt deeply resentful when a younger officer won the drawing.\textsuperscript{40}

The revised regulations did give a clearer definition of the structural composition of the Association. Each company, other than rifle companies, was to enroll at least forty and not more than seventy-five privates. A minimum of six companies could form together into a battalion.\textsuperscript{41} The riflemen were a special category and were allowed a maximum of fifty-six men per company, most probably because of the shortage of such weapons, and thus encouraging the development of more organizations of this type.

The Committee also devised a system of taxing non-associators, which presumably gave some satisfaction to those

\textsuperscript{40} Pa. Archives, 2nd Series, I, 568-569; Votes of the House, VIII, 7369-7380.

\textsuperscript{41} Votes of the House, VIII, 7371.
petitioning members. The new tax (two shillings and sixpence for each meeting missed) ended any idea of a voluntary Association and, in effect, created a compulsory military obligation for the men of Pennsylvania.

It should be noted that the Committee of Safety took defensive measures in areas other than the organization of the Associators. The first Pennsylvania Navy was created in the summer of 1775. Within a few days of the establishment of the articles regulating the Associators, another set of resolutions by the Committee set the Navy into motion. By early in 1776 thirteen ships were in the service of Pennsylvania under the appellation of The Provincial Armed Boats.

The Pennsylvania Artillery Company was raised in the fall of 1775. The Committee of Safety, however, put this organization of some thirty members into the status of a true militia. The articles regulating this small body differed sharply from those of the Associated Battalions. The death penalty could be applied, as the result of a conviction at a court-martial, to men who mutinied, displayed cowardice in action, deserted, or committed other

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42 Ibid., 7380-7384.
43 Papers of the Governors, III, 565-571.
44 Pa. Archives, 1st Series, IV, 739.
treasonable acts. A definite monthly pay scale was established at the rate of twenty dollars for the Captain and six dollars for the privates.45

Also in the category of extra defensive measures was the erection of the chevaux de frize, which was a system of pilings planted in the Delaware River in order to prevent British ships from proceeding inland and landing troops or threatening populous areas.46 These obstacles, made of heavy timber and planted on the river bottom by early "frogmen," had sharpened points reaching to just below the water's surface and were successful in closing the upper reaches of the river. A problem arose in 1784 requiring their removal after several trading ships were lost attempting to reach Philadelphia.47

During the construction of the chevaux de frize in November of 1775, the Committee of Safety looked ahead to more difficult times and commissioned a survey of iron cannon available in the vicinity of Philadelphia. These included weapons which could be carriage mounted as well as those fitted for ships. The subcommittee appointed for this project discovered 440 cannon ranging from two- to eighteen-

45Papers of the Governors, III, 541.


47Ibid., p. 757.
pounders. Of these, the Province of Pennsylvania owned eleven new and thirty old eighteen-pounders and fourteen other smaller weapons. The remainder of the total number were privately owned and were of the smaller type, ranging from two-to nine-pounders.43

In sum, six or seven months prior to the Declaration of Independence, Pennsylvania had raised a semi-voluntary army, The Associated Battalions, which consisted of possibly 20,000 men;49 a navy, The Provincial Armed Boats; the small but permanent organization, The Pennsylvania Artillery Company; developed a system for blockading the Delaware River; and supplied several Companies to the Continental Army. The value of the home defense forces remained an unknown factor during 1775. The years following would provide sufficient tests.


49 Ibid., 469. (This figure is based on a probable membership in the Associated Battalions as outlined in the regulations noted above compared to the forty-five battalions listed here.)
CHAPTER III
THE PENNSYLVANIA RIFLE
AND MUSKET BATTALIONS

By February of 1776 the military situation was begin-
ning to assume a permanent place in the business of governing
the various colonies. Sentiment for an official break with
England was no longer a subject limited to back room
discussions. Thomas Paine's pamphlet "Common Sense," an
emotional attack on King George and the monarchial system,
was avidly being read by large numbers of the colonials.
Governor Dunmore of Virginia, by recruiting slaves into a
loyalist army, probably converted thousands of southerners
and sympathetic northerners to the idea of independence.

The Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, in pursuance of
their duties, decided to raise a more structured and stable
militia to be placed on full time duty. The Committee, in
their proposal to the Assembly, mentioned that they had
worked hard to develop a good number of armed boats for the
province, but, "... it truly becomes us to prepare
seriously for the Storm gathering over the Colonies, and
which in the uncertainty of its course, may in a few weeks
fall upon this Province."¹

¹TCR, X, 592.
Samuel Miles was appointed by the Committee (as a member) to prepare an estimate of the expenses involved in raising a full time militia in the colony. On March 4, 1776, Miles presented his report which concluded that it would cost $172,772 for arming, paying, and supplying 1,500 men for the period of one year. Within a few days the Committee made a decision to go ahead with the project. They first asked the Assembly to raise 2,000 men, but when the resolve passed it was to enlist 1,500 men for a term of service that was to expire on January 1, 1778.

From the beginning Miles was in charge of the project. He was appointed Colonel and Commanding Officer of the newly established militia. His appointment to that position was not simply a matter of favoritism toward a fellow member of the Committee. Miles was a Baptist preacher and a strong advocate of the military life. In 1755 at the age of sixteen he joined a local militia organization and since that time belonged to several similar groups in various capacities. Although he was considered a rather stern individual, he commanded enough respect and popularity to be appointed to

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3 Ibid.; BSR, X, 490-491.

4 Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 308.
the State Court of Errors and Appeals in 1783 and was elected Mayor of Philadelphia in 1790.5

The new militia consisted of three battalions of 500 men each. In the capacity of superior officer, Colonel Miles assumed command of all three. His personal command was the first two battalions, made up of 1,000 riflemen. These he formed into one regiment which was generally styled the Rifle Battalions, or the Pennsylvania Rifle Regiment.6 John Cadwalader, the commander of Philadelphia's "Silk Stockings" Battalion and another member of the Committee, was selected to lead the third battalion, composed of 500 musketmen. Cadwalader, who had aspired to the top position, immediately wrote a note to the Assembly and declined his commission as second in command.7 The Assembly then turned to Samuel Atlee, an officer in the Lancaster County Associates, who accepted the job.8

Atlee was another gentlemen experienced in military affairs. He was just seventeen when he joined a frontier militia in 1756. By 1760 he had received a Captain's

6Votes of the House, VIII, 7446.
7Ibid., 7450.
8Ibid., 7453.
commission and continued to serve in the loosely structured military until the date of his appointment in 1776.9

Colonel Miles organized the riflemen into two battalions of six companies each. The individual companies contained seventy-two privates, a drummer and a fifer, four sergeants, three lieutenants, and one captain. Each battalion had a major, a lieutenant colonel, and two other administrative officers. The Musket Battalion was organized on the same pattern, except it was composed of eight companies of fifty-two privates each.10

On April 5, the Assembly issued the "Rules and Articles for the Government of the Pennsylvania Forces." This document of seventy-four articles and several additional resolves was written to cover the needs of the new militia. In contrast to the regulations governing the Associated Battalions, these articles reflected the serious nature of the new establishment.11 In general, the regulations dealt with the method of conducting a court-martial and the limits of authority involved in the numerous conceivable offenses which could bring a man to trial. The death penalty was authorized, though not mandatory, in cases wherein a conviction was handed down for giving out the password.

11Votes of the House, VIII, 7491-7503.
deserting one's post in a shameful manner, corresponding with the enemy, or inciting mutiny. Fines or periods of confinement were provided for minor offenses, such as cursing or behaving irreverently in places of worship. The whip was an instrument of discipline also employed in the rules of the new militia. Very specific figures were given in the articles in regards to the use of this device as a means of punishment. For example, a court-martial conviction for leaving one's post to gather plunder carried a mandatory sentence of at least twenty and not more than thirty-nine lashes.\(^\text{12}\)

Presumably there was some reluctance to initiate a system of severe punishments on the part of the designers of the militia. The enlistees were being asked to leave the relatively democratic Associated Battalions to join a truly militaristic organization. Perhaps many men were looking for a steady income, and the Rifle and Musket Battalions appeared more promising than the Continental Army.

Whatever the motives for joining may have been, there was a rush to join the new militia. Colonel Samuel Miles claimed that he recruited his entire quota and had a muster at Marcus Hook, just south of Philadelphia, within six weeks of his appointment.\(^\text{13}\) Colonel Samuel Atlee probably had a

\(^{12}\)Ibid.

similar experience in his efforts to raise the Musket Battalion. As it was, both officers were faced with a recruiting problem common to the times - the bonus collector. Atlee, in particular, was confronted with men enlisting and receiving their bonus of a month's pay in advance and then deserting. Advertisements in the newspapers reflect how deeply incensed some of the Colonel's officers were in regard to these opportunists. By May 1, 1776, the notices were appearing in the Pennsylvania Gazette and other publications.

Captain Patrick Anderson of Chester County inserted lengthy and descriptive advertisements in an effort to recoup some of his losses. One notice entered by this officer, who was elected to the General Assembly before the war's conclusion, offered fifteen dollars reward for the return of John Gibson. Only a painting could have been more graphic. Gibson, who was labeled a thief, had black hair and a dark complexion. He was a "well set" five-feet-and-seven-inches tall. His nose was a prominent feature, being sharply pointed but drooping at the tip and having wide and flared nostrils. There was a rash on his right hand and a short scar above his right eye. He was wearing a new beaver hat which had a white lining, a "fine"
shirt with initials on it, white ribbed stockings, deerskin breeches, and a pair of shoes "lately half-soaled." Anderson also described a number of articles Gibson was carrying and gave similar details about the deserter's horse. These advertisements, which give the reader a rather complete impression of the Pennsylvania militiaman, may have been worth the effort. A muster of Captain Anderson's Company several months later includes the name of John Gibson.  

While Colonel Atlee was busily engaged in recruiting, Colonel Miles was embarking on his first military expedition. Curiously enough this engagement was a naval battle. During the first week of May, two British men-of-war began a move up the Delaware River. The Roebuck and Liverpool, carrying forty-eight and twenty-eight guns respectively, were accompanied up the Delaware by several tenders, and on May 8, were situated near the mouth of the Brandywine River, at Wilmington. There they engaged several of the small yellow and black ships of the Pennsylvania Armed Boats. The weather was extremely cold, damp, and windy. Perhaps because of the high winds, the Roebuck ran aground. With the Liverpool anchored nearby, the crew of the Roebuck labored through the night, and by morning's first light the two

15 Pa. Gazette, May 1, 1776.
British vessels were moving back down the river toward open waters. Although the men-of-war made their retreat with almost no damage, several British seamen, including a lieutenant, were somehow captured during the engagement. Losses on the provincial side were one man killed and two wounded.

Miles was at Wilmington on May 8, with 100 to 150 of his riflemen. Of the nearly 1,000 men recruited, he was able to arm only these few in time for the march to Delaware. Although Miles and his men could do nothing more than observe the action from the beaches, they found plenty to complain about. Miles sent a dispatch to the Committee mentioning that they were both cold and hungry. He also described the reluctance of the Pennsylvania ships to get in close enough to do any damage to the men-of-war.

Indeed it appears that the Roebuck could have been taken or burned during the action. Numerous complaints of a lack of ammunition and wet powder may explain why the Pennsylvania fleet did not capture or sink the grounded ship. However, the fact that the Actna, a fire ship, which was

19Ibid., 219.
20Ibid., 219.
standing nearby, was not used to burn the Roebuck during the night remains a central mystery in the records of the engagement.22

In the meantime, events were occurring to the north that were to shape the future of the Pennsylvania Rifle and Musket Battalions. In March, General William Howe, the newly appointed commander of the British forces in America, decided to evacuate Boston. The American forces there were gaining strategic positions, and Howe wanted time to prepare a proper invasion. This retreat, though a boost to the American's morale, left General Washington with a problem of how to best employ his troops to meet the enemy's next attack. The prime question was where would the British make their next push. Washington considered both New Jersey, as a route to Philadelphia, and New York, as the most likely locations for the next major engagement.23 By April Washington began to formulate a solution to his problem of how to insure the safety of both locations without dividing his army into two weak forces. At first, he conceived of a network of militia scattered around both locations. These local troops were to develop a swift line of communication

22Pa., Archives, 2nd Series, I, 232; PCh, X, 582.

and a capacity to make a brief stand while the General was rushing his main army to the attack.  

In May, General Washington, Brigadier General Horatio Gates, and Major General Thomas Mifflin met with a special Congressional committee to determine the best course of action and the needs of the army. The generals declared that if the British launched their attack in New York they would land with an army of some 12,500 men and that to defend the area would require 15,000 troops. The officers suggested raising 2,000 men from Massachusetts, 5,500 men from Connecticut, 3,000 from New York, 3,300 from New Jersey, and 1,200 from Pennsylvania. They also emphatically stated that a camp should be formed to protect the middle colonies. The proposed complement for this second organization was 6,000 militiamen from Pennsylvania, 3,400 from Maryland, and 300 from Delaware. The Congressional committee was told that the enlistments of these men should run through the first of December.  

Congress hurriedly acted upon these suggestions. It was decided that General Washington and his army, with reinforcements from several colonies, would set up his headquarters in New York. Perth Amboy, New Jersey, was established as the

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24 Washington's Writings, IV, 498, 509, 523.
25 JCC, IV, 399-400.
location of the Flying Camp and headquarters for the army of the middle colonies.  

Transmitting the new plan for defending the middle colonies to the government of Pennsylvania, however, proved somewhat difficult. Pennsylvania was in the throes of an internal political revolution, and no one was quite sure where the authority to act on Congress' orders rested. A brief look at the status of the governmental bodies will help explain why, as late as July 23, a committee in Berks County was still trying to discover what was expected of their Associates in the matter of forming a Flying Camp in New Jersey.  

In mid-May, Congress recommended the dissolution of the old colonial governments and the calling of conventions for the implementation of new ones. In Pennsylvania, the more radical leadership called for a Provincial Conference, which held its first meeting in June. The Assembly was divided in its opinion of this extra-legal movement and it hesitated to act on any issue, primarily because of the strength and popularity of the Conference. The members of the Conference, however, moved boldly forward and began assuming governmental authority.  

26 Ibid., 401; Ward, Revolution, I, 204.  
27 PCC, X, 654-655.  
The Conference, in line with Congress' request, decided to hold an election to select the delegates to a state constitutional convention. Through well executed maneuvers, such as giving the vote to all militiamen and enlisting the support of such powerful groups as the Committee of Privates, the Conference stacked the election toward the forces in favor of independence.  

The Committee of Safety, meanwhile, received the request for troops for the New Jersey Flying Camp and refused to act, claiming that since the Assembly was recessed it would be in the best interest of all parties concerned if Congress directed an order specifically to the Committee, thus assuming any responsibility. Congress declined this request.

The Conference then assumed the task of raising men for the Flying Camp. On June 25, a resolve from this self-empowered body was directed to the Committee of Safety, giving them a complete outline for carrying out Pennsylvania's obligation. The authority of the Conference in this matter appears rather complete. Although the Committee of Safety

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29 Hawke, Midst of a Revolution, 186; Dunaway, History of Pennsylvania, 210-211. The Committee of Privates was composed of the enlisted membership of the Associated Battalions.

30 PCR, X, 611.
did not vigorously follow these directions, they were accepted as the plan to follow.31

The allotments of troops to be raised were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Troops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia City</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philadelphia County</td>
<td>746</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bucks County</td>
<td>400</td>
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<td>Chester County</td>
<td>652</td>
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<td>Northampton County</td>
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<tr>
<td>York County</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumberland County</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4,500

Colonel Miles' Battalions 1,500

6,00032

The Committee of Safety made no move toward supplying these men until they received a message from John Hancock, President of the Congress, requesting them to take some action in the matter.33 Colonel Miles and Colonel Atlee were sent for immediately. Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Brodhead, commander of Miles' Second Rifle Battalion, was ordered to prepare his men for transportation to New Jersey. The pay of all three battalions was raised to the scale of the Continental Army.34

No action on enlisting the Associators was taken by the


33PCR, X, 628.

34Ibid., 629; Pa. Archives, 2nd Series, X, 207.
Committee, although men were being recruited and were marching out of the province in early July.  

By July 22, the Provincial Convention was in session and assumed all governmental authority. The Convention asked the Committee of Safety to present their books for inspection, and without a whimper the Committee dissolved. To replace this body, the Convention appointed the Council of Safety with David Rittenhouse as chairman. The Council then assumed the duties of the defunct Committee with hardly any break in the proceedings. The Assembly, with little control over any aspect of government, withered away.

In September the Convention finished its work on the new constitution, and by November Pennsylvania's government was finally stabilized. The constitution provided for a more representative Assembly and a plural executive, known as the Supreme Executive Council. The Council of Safety began functioning under the authority of the Assembly.

Despite this interlude of political confusion in Pennsylvania, military preparations continued. The Committee of Safety, during its final days, regularly drew funds from the provincial treasury for arming and supplying the Provincial Armed Boats, the Associated Battalions, and the

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35 PCR, X, 636.
36 Dunaway, History of Pennsylvania, p. 211.
37 Ibid., 213.
Rifle and Musket Battalions. Tents, firearms, bandages, and powder were ordered for the troops going to New Jersey. Because of several acts of sabatoge in and around Philadelphia, including the destruction of a major pier, the Committee established three patrols of guards to protect the city at night.

Following the orders of the Committee, Colonel Miles' Rifle Battalions, Colonel Atlee and his Musket Battalion, and Colonel Thomas Proctor's Pennsylvania Artillery marched to Trenton, New Jersey. General Washington was at first very pleased with the response of the Pennsylvanians. In a letter to Congress he commended the militiamen and the Committee of Safety. Congress, in turn, ordered that the Pennsylvania troops be awarded a bonus of a month's salary.

Miles, on his arrival in New Jersey, discovered what he considered an intolerable situation. Congress had asked the Assembly of Pennsylvania to appoint two Brigadier Generals from their province to command the troops at the Flying Camp. The two officers were to be second in command to General Hugh Mercer, who was appointed by Washington.

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38 FCN, X, 630.
39 Ibid., 633.
41 Washington's Writings, V, 247-248; JCC, V, 531.
42 JCC, IV, 414.
The Assembly, being inactive at the time, did nothing in the matter, and a group of officers and privates from the Associated Battalions took it upon themselves to elect the Generals. Six officers were nominated for the posts, and the votes indicated a particular preference for Colonel Daniel Roberdeau, commander of the Second Battalion of Philadelphia City Associators. Roberdeau received one hundred and six votes and was declared First Brigadier General. The Position of Second Brigadier General went to James Ewing, who received eighty-five votes. Miles took an unrewarding third place in the election, with eighty-two votes. Miles, Atlee, and Proctor, who had no part in the election, refused to serve under the first Brigadier General elected by the Pennsylvania militia. Probably in response to this situation, General Washington ordered Miles to take his Pennsylvania troops to Perth Amboy and to place himself under General Mercer's command. Miles happily complied, and, by July 21, his battalions were encamped at the headquarters on Raritan Bay.

Mercer was in the meantime complaining to Washington that only 3,000 of the expected 10,000 men had mustered at the Flying Camp. The Commander-in-Chief, however, had other concerns that needed his attention. Early in August,

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44 Washington's Writings, V, 278.
45 Ibid., 295.
intelligence reports began to indicate that the British had decided to make an invasion of New York their next project. The practical value of the Flying Camp began to decline. Instead of the advice he was expecting, Mercer received a letter from Washington ordering him to send 2,000 troops to New York.\textsuperscript{46}

Colonel Miles and his Battalions marched immediately to Washington's headquarters to the north. Washington's headquarters was in a state of considerable confusion when the Pennsylvanians arrived on August 12. No one seemed quite sure of Great Britain's intentions. The Commander-in-Chief, although he was aware of the landing of some 9,000 of Howe's troops on Long Island, prepared to receive the main attack across the East River in New York.\textsuperscript{47} He sent Major General Israel Putnam, as the officer-in-charge, and Major General John Sullivan, as the second officer, to attend to the operations on Long Island. However, the British commander, General Howe, chose the island as the place to land his entire army, which consisted of some 20,000 men including 5,000 Hessian mercenaries. Putnam and Sullivan had 8,000

\textsuperscript{46}Ibid., 402-404.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., 416; Ward, Revolution, I, 213.
men on the island, the majority of them being militia collected from the northern and middle states.

The battle of Long Island is a complicated narrative of an almost fatal encounter for the American Army. The extent of the terrible defeat of Washington's troops was in direct proportion to the relative ineptitude of the leadership on both sides. General Howe can be credited with the swift movement of his troops into a highly favorable position on the island, but there is little excuse for his failure to blockade the East River escape route. Such a blockade would have resulted in the capture and destruction of the greatest part of the Continental Army and could have ended the rebellion. On the other hand, Washington is given credit for saving his army by an extremely swift and well coordinated escape across the East River. His mistakes were numerous, including the appointment of Putnam, who knew nothing of the geography of Long Island, as the superior officer and the failure to develop any intelligence about the strength and intentions of the British.

The climactic battle occurred on August 27, 1776. The First Pennsylvania Continental Line, commanded by Colonel

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49 An excellent discussion on these points is found in, Ward, Revolution, I, 235-237.
Edward Hand; Captain Nicholas Lutz's Flying Camp Company, enlisted from Berks County, Pennsylvania; Captain Andrew Kechline's Flying Camp Company, from Bucks County; and the Battalions of Miles and Atlee all participated. The Third Pennsylvania Battalion (continental), commanded by Colonel John Shee, was ordered onto Long Island on August 28, to serve as a rear guard for the army's retreat. The Fifth Battalion, led by Colonel Robert Magaw, may have accompanied Shee on that mission.

Colonel Atlee and Captains Kechline and Lutz and their troops were placed in the Brigade of General Lord Sterling, who formed his 2,300 men next to Gowannus Bay and prepared to meet the British troops commanded by Major General James Grant. Grant was bringing nine regiments, numbering about 5,000 men, from the south. Sterling ordered Atlee and a number of his militiamen to post themselves some distance to the left of the brigade, in order to oppose any flanking efforts on the part of Grant. There the Pennsylvanians contacted two regiments of the British regulars. After several hours struggle, Atlee discovered that the Hessian troops, part of some 5,000 German mercenaries who were on Long Island, were to his rear. Knowing the perilous position of

\[50\] Pa. Archives, 2nd Series, X, 312; Ibid., XIV, 278, 571; Ibid., I, 512.

the entirety of Sterling's Brigade, Atlee turned his men back toward the bay. Sterling, however, was well aware of his situation, and, to Atlee's surprise, he had already begun a retreat to the north, hotly pursued by a part of Grant's command. A number of Atlee's men, without consulting him, launched an attack on the British who were trailing Sterling. The British troops, in turn, decided to face their new adversaries, who were quickly cut off from all hope of escape. Atlee and his men made a number of futile charges trying to find an escape route, but late in the afternoon, with no ammunition remaining, they were forced to surrender.\textsuperscript{52}

Colonel Miles and his riflemen were in an equally precarious situation. Miles was ordered (probably by General Putnam) to take up a position at a location about two miles to the northeast of Sterling's Brigade and to watch the movements of the enemy in that quarter. Howe's main army moved west along a road to Miles's rear, while the Hessians took up a station to his front. The Pennsylvania Rifles and the Hessians camped within a few hundred yards of each other on the night of August 26. The following morning Miles engaged the Hessians briefly and then turned back to discover what Howe and his men were doing. He left Lieutenant Colonel Brodhead and the Second Battalion as a rear guard. Miles later claimed that he had warned General Sullivan that

\textsuperscript{52}Pa. Archives, 2nd Series, I, 512-516; Ward, Revolution, I, 216.
Howe would probably move up Jamaica Road and try to cut off the escape of the American troops in the field. Thus, with 230 men, he came upon a large body of British troops moving east up Jamaica Road, just as he had earlier predicted. As the Pennsylvanians were trying to determine a plan of action, they discovered that the troops they were facing were merely the rear guard and baggage train of a two-mile long column of the main army, numbering some 10,000 men. Miles, seeing that his position was hopeless, sent a messenger to Brodhead and told the Second Battalion to make their escape as best they could — which they did, scattering in all directions. Most of the First Battalion was later captured by a detachment of Hessian soldiers as they tried to flee to the north.

During the night of August 28, Washington executed his masterful plan of escape across the East River. Prior to this retreat, the numbers of men killed or captured by the British forces were high, something between 1,000 and 4,000. The battalions of Miles and Atlee were almost totally destroyed. Many of those who were neither killed nor captured decided they had seen enough of New York and fled to Pennsylvania. Musters of the three battalions show that immediately following the battle at Long Island their total numbers were less

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54 Ibid., 520-522.
55 Ward, Revolution, I, 226-227; Commager and Morris, Seventy-Six, p. 447.
than 400, this down from 1,273 a month earlier. Many of the officers of the battalions, including Miles and Atlee, were prisoners of the British. Miles was held captive until April of 1778, when he was exchanged. Atlee was in custody until August of 1778, when he was likewise traded for a British officer.

In September a group of fifty-eight deserters from the Pennsylvania Battalions returned to Philadelphia and petitioned the Council of Safety to give relief for a number of their grievances. The men said that they were told that they would be out of the state for no more than six weeks, that they had received no pay since leaving Pennsylvania, that they had never received as much as one-half of the rations they were promised, and, since their commanding officers were captured, that they wished to return home and to serve there in the defense of the state. Congress, on hearing of the deserters and the petition, asked the Provincial Convention to do whatever was necessary to get the men to return to New York. The Council decided, in an order of October 5, to collect the remains of the three battalions and to recruit

enough men to form one state battalion and to place two
battalions in the Continental Line. The new state militia
battalion, when finally organized in 1777, came to be known
as the State Regiment of Foot.

Thus Major Thomas Proctor's Pennsylvania Artillery
Company (which by October, 1776, was really two companies),
the Provincial Armed Boats, and, of course, the Associated
Battalions were the total of the state's home defense force
in late 1776. A test for the Associators came next.

59PCHR, X, 743; Pa. Archives, 5th Series, II, 255.
60PCHR, X, 742.
CHAPTER IV

THE ASSOCIATED BATTALIONS

For all practical purposes the disaster at Long Island ended the importance of the Pennsylvania Rifle and Musket Battalions. Although a number of the Associators took part in that engagement, most of the membership remained at home in Pennsylvania or at the Flying Camp in New Jersey. It should be noted that General Mercer went to Long Island, and, thus, there may have been more of the Flying Camp there than is noted in the records of the battle. Nevertheless, General Roberdeau maintained the appearance of an army in New Jersey during Mercer's absence.

In the examination of the Flying Camp and the ensuing actions, one should take into consideration the apparent circumstances and attitudes of the individuals who joined the Associated Battalions. In the first instance, the privates, the rank and file, were those who, for a variety of reasons, declined the numerous efforts and enticements of the officers who were recruiting for the Continental Army. Thus, it is clear that those who joined the Associators were not so devoted to the American cause that they were willing to sacrifice everything in the effort. The maintenance of one's family, farm, or business took precedence over a total personal
commitment. Officers of the Associated Battalions, although they may have been more inclined toward military affairs, were also confronted with these conflicting propositions. In addition, they were often refused commissions to positions in the Continental establishment which they considered proper for their particular talents. Thus the militia officers were generally considered inferior, although, considering the state of American military leadership at the time, one must not accept that evaluation too readily.

The Committee of Safety and its successor, the Council of Safety, did what they could to allow for some of the difficult circumstances relating to the status of the Associators. As the Flying Camp was being raised, the Committee passed a resolve to see that the families of the departing men would be provided with the necessities of life. Local Justices of the Peace were instructed to raise money in their districts to meet that end. In cases where the Justices were unable to meet the demand, the Committee charged the wealthier families with the duty of caring for their less fortunate neighbors.\footnote{FCR, X, 646.} This effort was spurred by a request of Congress, which asked that all of the Associated Battalions of Pennsylvania, excepting those in the counties of Bedford,
Westmoreland, and Northumberland, who were to guard the frontier, be sent to New Jersey.²

As it happened, the Flying Camp in New Jersey was never organized to anyone's satisfaction. The transfer of great numbers of troops to Long Island and the concentration of the war in the New York area temporarily relegated the New Jersey camp to a matter of secondary importance. Many of those in camp had little use for the rigors of military life and, especially after the disaster at Long Island, returned home. The Council of Safety took pains to counteract this trend and found itself engaged in denying numerous freely circulating rumors, some bordering on the absurd. A handbill read, "... some designing, ill-disposed persons, have spread false Reports that the number of Troops now in New Jersey is too great; that are in Consequence discharged by the Generals ..."³ This despite the fact that General Mercer had within the month complained of the great lack of troops in camp.⁴ Deserters were so numerous that the Council required all officers to submit the names of missing men for publication.⁵

²JCC, V, 591.
³Papers of the Governors, III, 617.
⁴Washington's Writings, V, 295.
⁵PCR, X, 687.
As General Howe continued sweeping the American Army before him in a series of battles in New York, the dangers facing New Jersey became more apparent to some Pennsylvanians. By September the Council of Safety ordered all of the Philadelphia Associators to march to Perth Amboy. Many left the city with little more than a promise that they would be supplied with weapons when they reached camp. By the end of November most of these troops had either deserted or received discharges, forcing Congress once again to press the Pennsylvania Council for a new recruiting effort.

Meanwhile, Howe invaded New Jersey. Washington, because of the desertions, fought a delaying action. The real crisis that constantly worried the American commander was the upcoming expiration of enlistments. Unless something could be done to induce men to remain, there would be no army whatsoever by the end of 1776. As Washington retreated through New Jersey, the remains of his army merged with the remnants of the Flying Camp, and, as there was no longer a purpose for the existence of the latter, it ceased to exist as an institution.

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6 Ibid., 704.
7 JCC, VI, 979.
8 Washington's Writings, VI, 347; Commager and Morris, 'Seventy-Six', pp. 509-510.
9 Washington's Writings, V, 215n.
As the likelihood of a British attack on Philadelphia became more apparent, the Council exerted itself to return the Associated Battalions to Washington's camp. Colonel John Cadwalader was chosen to form the Philadelphia Associators into one brigade and to proceed with them to New Jersey, subject to the orders of General Washington. Cadwalader had his troops at Bristol on December 13. The brigade was not an impressive sight, as evidenced by a letter written to the Council on that date:

The Brigade commanded by Col. Cadwallader, consisting of the Philada. militia, came to this place . . . We are greatly distressed to find no more of the Militia of our state Joining General Washington at this time, for God's Sake what shall we do . . . What are you doing with the Tories & disaffected persons?

Washington came upon the idea of launching an attack at Trenton. If his army could win a daring victory at the close of the year, it would not only delay an attack on Philadelphia, but would lift the patriots' morale and encourage enlistments. He also knew that to fail would end any hope of continuing the struggle. He decided to gamble the remains of his army

\[\text{10} \text{PCR, XI, 27.} \]

on a swift encounter at Trenton because, "Necessity, dire necessity will - nay, must justify any attempt."\(^{12}\)

Lord Charles Cornwallis, in charge of the British forces in New Jersey, ended his operations by the fourteenth of December. He posted Hessian troops throughout the state and returned to New York to wait out the winter. The Hessian Colonel, von Donop, was placed in command of some 3,000 troops in the Trenton-Bordentown area.\(^{13}\) Von Donop established his headquarters near Bordentown and stationed about 1,500 troops under the command of Colonel Johann Hall at Trenton.\(^{14}\)

Washington carefully developed a plan for the attack on Trenton. The night of December 25 was selected for beginning the operation. The Pennsylvania Associators were separated into two divisions. Colonel Cadwalader, who was appointed Brigadier General that night, was to cross the Delaware River near Bristol with 1,000 Associators and about 900 Rhode Island Continentals.\(^{15}\) Their task was to prevent von Donop


\(^{13}\)Ward, Revolution, I, 291.


\(^{15}\)PCR, XI, 62; Ward, Revolution, I, 293.
from moving up from Bordentown and joining the action at Trenton. General James Ewing, with 700 Associators, was to cross at the Assunpink Creek near the southern edge of Trenton and to prevent Hall's men from escaping toward Bordentown. The main forces, some 2,400 men, commanded by Washington and his officers would attack the town from the north.  

The engagement at Trenton was a tremendous success. Washington marched his men through sleet and snow, ferried them across the ice-jammed Delaware, marched them again to strategic locations around the town, fought a prolonged battle mostly with artillery and bayonet, and captured nearly 1,000 enemy troops and a great quantity of supplies. Cadwalader and Ewing both failed the test. Cadwalader found the river too much of an obstacle. Twice, and at two different locations, he started his men across and in both cases he turned back. In one instance the men and horses completed the crossing and found that they were unable to drag their artillery pieces across the ice and up to the shore. Cadwalader ordered the entire brigade back to the Pennsylvania side rather than face the possibility of meeting von Donop without this heavy support.  

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16 Ward, Revolution, I, 293; Commager and Morris, Seventy-Six, 509.


18 William Young, "Sergeant William Young's Journal," The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, VIII (1884), 258. (Hereinafter referred to as Young, "Journal.")
His troops were at the point of mutiny because of his lack of resolution.\(^\text{19}\)

General Ewing and his Associators decided that it was too risky even to attempt a crossing. Presumably they remained under arms for the night. Thus while Washington, under the most difficult conditions, was making his successful sweep of the enemy on December 26, Ewing and Cadwalader and the Associators were all on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware speculating as to what might have happened to the Commander-in-Chief.\(^\text{20}\)

In the week that followed the battle of Trenton, the Associators were tested again. The lack of organization and the loosely structured nature of the Associated Battalions, along with a lack of record keeping, prevents an accurate knowledge of which Associators were involved in the battle of Princeton. Desertion and expiring enlistments changed the makeup of these battalions daily. With new troops arriving from all quarters of Pennsylvania, and old troops departing, it was impossible for the ranking officers in Washington's army to determine the numbers and location of soldiers in their respective commands.\(^\text{21}\)


\(^{21}\) Pa. Archives, 1st Series, V, 149-150.
It is quite evident that the Associated Battalions, in whatever form they appeared, did contribute to Washington's last actions in New Jersey in 1777. The maneuvering and the hit and run tactics, which Washington used to good advantage in the battle of Princeton, led to the Associated Battalions' most successful venture. General Mercer and General Cadwalader both joined their brigades of Associators in the action. Other companies from Philadelphia and the surrounding territory were also involved. 22

The battle of Princeton began early on the morning of January 3, 1777. General Mercer and his Associators contacted a surprised Colonel Charles Mawhood. Mawhood's troops were a rear guard for Cornwallis, who had rushed back to New Jersey after he received the news of Trenton. Cornwallis was moving south from Princeton in search of Washington's army. Washington had circled Cornwallis' position during the night. Mercer and his Associators attacked Mawhood's line, but were unsuccessful. When the British professionals formed and advanced, the ill-organized Pennsylvanians broke and fled. As Mawhood was pursuing Mercer, Cadwalader and his brigade moved up and joined the fray. These Pennsylvania troops stood their ground in good order, firing their weapons at close range, until Mawhood decided on a bayonet charge. At this, Cadwalader's men joined Mercer's troops, who were still fleeing the

22 Ward, Revolution, I, 313.
engagement. During the rout, General Washington and a body of the Continentals arrived on the scene. Cadwalader's brigade re-formed, as did a part of Mercer's, and Mawhood was forced into a fighting retreat.  

Thus the New Jersey campaign ended. Cornwallis saw no good purpose to pursuing a hit and run fight throughout the winter and pulled his troops back to Amboy and New York. The Americans, numbering some 4,000, of which at least one-half were militia, bested 8,000 or more of the British professionals. Philadelphia was temporarily freed of the threat of invasion, and Washington moved the remains of his army into winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey.

While Washington was at Morristown trying to organize an army of regular troops, the Pennsylvania government tried to reorganize the state troops. In March of 1777, the new constitution of Pennsylvania went into effect. Elections were held, and the Supreme Executive Council assumed control of the administrative functions of the state. Thomas Wharton, Jr. was elected President and functioned as a chairman of the Council. Wharton had previously served as Chairman of the Council of Safety. The new General Assembly assumed legislative functions.

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One of the first acts passed by the new Assembly was a set of articles for governing the Associated Battalions. The new articles, entitled "An Act to Regulate the Militia of the Common-Wealth of Pennsylvania," was a response to the pleadings of many officers, who wished a reorganization that would clearly define the status of the non-associators. Although the act did restructure and redefine the Associated Battalions, it did not solve the problem of non-participation. In fact, in areas other than the physical structure, it actually weakened the battalions. All males between the ages of eighteen and fifty-three, with the exception of the disabled, members of Congress, Clergymen, Executive Councilmen, Supreme Court Judges, and college faculty, were required to join the Associators, but those who refused were merely given a small fine. Each county and the City of Philadelphia were divided into five districts. The counties and the city were to be organized by an officer known as the Lieutenant. The five districts within each of these jurisdictions were placed under the control of Sub-lieutenants, who were in turn responsible to the Lieutenants. A minimum of 440 privates were to be enrolled in each district. The district was then further divided into eight classes. In anticipation of being called into active service, the individual soldier in each company...

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26 Pa. Archives, 1st Series, V, 128, 144, 158, 164, 188.
was rotated from class to class every two months. Thus if the first and second class of a particular county was called out, the individual had a good chance of missing the call, or at the worst would only serve a short time. To make the new organization even more attractive, any member except the officers could hire substitutes for active duty, and in the tradition of Benjamin Franklin’s old Association, no corporal punishment was allowed. No one, unless called into active duty, was required to drill more than twelve days a year. In sum, the act was extremely weak. It did not solve the problem of the non-associators, and the lack of measures to develop a disciplined force made the Associators almost totally ineffective, except for the use of numbers to fill in gaps, in the efforts of the Continental Army.

The Supreme Executive Council appointed a Board of War, headed by Owen Biddle and David Rittenhouse, in March of 1777. This Board was directed to handle all of the military affairs of the land forces of the state. The task of procuring supplies and raising men for the twelve regiments of Continental troops, which Congress had ordered from Pennsylvania, also fell under its jurisdiction. A Navy Board was appointed in February by the outgoing Council of Safety and was continued by the Executive Council. The Navy Board was given the powers

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of administration over the chevaux de frize and all other affairs concerning naval operations in Pennsylvania. Both boards served until the fall of 1777 and were then dissolved by the Executive Council, which assumed their functions.

The only other shift in governmental power in Pennsylvania during the war came in the fall of 1777. When the British occupied Philadelphia, Congress and the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council fled to the relative safety of Lancaster. With the state government virtually defunct, members of the Assembly and the Executive Council formed a Council of Safety in an effort to provide a semblance of leadership. All functions of the Assembly were invested in this small body. The Council of Safety and the Supreme Executive Council both functioned from October 17, 1777, through December 6, 1777, when the former body dissolved. During this inclusive period, both bodies directed the state's civil and military affairs.

In March, while the Associators were being reorganized, the Board of War decided to gather the remnants of the troops who had served under Colonels Miles and Atlee and to re-form them into a new state militia battalion. Since the disaster of

29 Ibid., 72, 226.
30 Papers of the Governors, III, 659-660.
31 Ibid., 353.
Long Island, a number of these men were serving in several capacities, ranging from recruiting officers to troops in the Flying Camp and other Continental battalions. In April, the Board began selecting officers, and on May 2, Colonel John Bull was appointed Commander of the New Pennsylvania State Regiment of Foot. Bull was an outsider, a former Commander of the First Pennsylvania Battalion (Continental), who had quit that post because of difficulties with his junior officers. He was also a member of the Board of War. The other officers, who had served their time in the Rifle and Musket Battalions, were incensed that Bull was appointed to a position they felt should have been filled from within their ranks. Indeed, forty officers petitioned the General Assembly and threatened to quit the regiment unless Bull was removed. The Assembly, in a maneuver designed to satisfy all parties, promoted Bull to Adjutant General of the State Militia, and turned the command of the regiment over to Colonel Walter Stewart. As the state was having difficulty filling its quota for the Continental Army, the Regiment of Foot was offered to Congress for service as a Continental regiment.

33 Ibid., 266.
34 Ibid., I, 11, 745-746.
The selection of Stewart to replace Bull may appear as a peculiar choice in light of the petition submitted by the regimental officers. Stewart's previous service was as a captain in the Third Pennsylvania Battalion (Continental) as an Aid-de-Camp to Major-General Horatio Gates. Nowhere does his name appear on the muster rolls of Colonel Miles' or Colonel Atlee's battalions. Perhaps some of the officers and men of these decimated ranks served temporarily in Stewart's command during the period between August 28, 1776, and the time of the establishment of the new state regiment. Perhaps Stewart's personality was better suited to the position. Whatever the case, the officers did not dispute his right to the command.36

Early in the year the leadership of Philadelphia began to prepare for a British invasion of Pennsylvania. Nobody doubted that the state was next on Howe's agenda. What no one could decide was just when the British commander would make his move. In April, President Wharton of the Supreme Executive Council warned of the imminent danger facing Pennsylvania. He feared that the militia would not be prepared for any engagement in the near future and urged all men to be ready to do whatever they could. He promised that the Continental Army would soon set up a camp near Philadelphia.

where the militia could muster if they were called out. 37
Most of the militia had been dismissed by Washington following
his removal to Morristown to set up his headquarters.
Cadwalader's brigade was broken up and sent home by February,
1777. 38

During the summer months, the militia was called into
active service. Beginning in May and continuing throughout
the season, the Board of War struggled with the problems of
how many classes to raise, from which counties they should be
raised, and the details of their organization. Because of the
call, many of the Lieutenants and Sub-lieutenants were unable
to organize the counties and districts in compliance with the
Militia Act. There was not enough time. Many officers simply
asked for volunteers. Confusion was the order of the day. 39

The invasion of Pennsylvania finally occurred in August
of 1777. Howe transported his troops by sea from New York
rather than marching them across New Jersey. Washington had
his main army at Germantown when Howe made his landing at Head
of Elk on the Chesapeake Bay. 40 Congress resolved that

37 Papers of the Governors, III, 653-655. (Following the
issuance of the Militia Act in March, 1777, the term "Militia"
became the common usage and the terms "Associators" and
"Associated Battalions" began to fade.)

38 "Military Papers of General John Cadwalader,"
Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography, XXXII (1908),
164.


40 Ward, Revolution, 1 224
Pennsylvania should have 4,000 militiamen under arms and ready
to receive the orders of the Commander-in-Chief. These militiamen,
along with the militia from Delaware and Maryland, were
enrolled through November 30 and put in the pay of the
Continental Army. Large numbers of these troops arrived at
camp unarmed. General James Potter recorded that when the
militia arrived at the headquarters in Wilmington on
September 1, they had very few weapons. Many men who were
asked to supply their own muskets and rifles refused, saying
that they would never be reimbursed if their weapons were
lost.

In all, by the beginning of the action with Howe's forces,
the Pennsylvania militia in service totalled 2,973 men, 2,043
of those recorded as being fit for duty. They were arranged
in two brigades, James Potter commanding one and James Irvine
commanding the second. The whole of the Pennsylvania militia
was attached to General Anthony Wayne's Pennsylvania Regiment.
As the action moved from the Brandywine Creek to Philadelphia

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41 Pa. Archives, 1st Series, V, 539.
42 Ibid., 570.
43 Ibid., 595. (This figure does not include the State
Regiment of Foot.)
44 Washington's Writings, VII, 50; Pa. Archives, 2nd
Series, III, 611. (General Cadwalader retired and refused a
commission in the Continental Army.)
and Germantown, the militia was, in companies and as a division on different occasions, detached and sent into numerous combat situations.

The State Regiment of Foot made a stand with the Tenth Virginia Continentals as the American Army was retreating north from the Brandywine. This was one of the most determined efforts in the campaign. The main force of the British Army flanked and surprised General John Sullivan's division near Chadd's Ford on the Brandywine. The Tenth Virginia and the Pennsylvania Foot were detached from General Nathanael Greene's division, which was several miles away, and sent to discover the source of the heavy firing heard throughout the countryside. Until this moment, four or five o'clock on the afternoon of September 11, Washington was unsure of the location of the main British force and, consequently, the Americans were poorly deployed. For almost an hour Colonel Stewart's Pennsylvanians and the Virginians checked the vastly superior numbers of enemy troops, giving the Americans time to regroup and began an orderly withdrawal.\(^\text{45}\)

Much has been made of this stand by the small group of Pennsylvanians and Virginians which saved Sullivan's division from certain destruction. Both William Gordon, the eighteenth-century historian, and Christopher Ward, the modern military historian, have acknowledged the importance of this engagement.\(^\text{45}\)

historian, claim the feat was the more impressive because Stewart's Regiment and the Virginians were raw and untested troops. Nothing could be further from the truth, at least in the case of the Pennsylvanians. It is true that the regiment was newly organized and as an organization had never faced the enemy. However, Colonel Stewart and the majority of his officers and men were veterans of Long Island, the New York campaign, and the battles of Trenton and Princeton. Stewart's men on the whole were as experienced and professional as almost any of the troops in Washington's army.

After the loss at the Brandywine, Washington was again maneuvered out of position, and Howe took Philadelphia. In October, the American army, with thoughts of liberating Philadelphia before the year's end, gathered to the west and marched on Germantown, where Howe set up a temporary headquarters. The Pennsylvania militia now consisting of over 3,000 men, commanded by Armstrong, was ordered to circle to the south and to advance on the village from that direction. While Washington's army attacked the center of the town, Armstrong began a cannonade of the Hessians guarding the British right flank. The Hessians broke under the heavy fire but re-formed after Armstrong decided not to pursue them. The

Hessians, seeing the reluctance of the Pennsylvanians, made a charge and drove them back to the countryside. Washington and his forces were driven out of the village after a furious battle. The failure of his flanking troops and a short supply of ammunition caused the withdrawal.

Following the defeat at Germantown, the Americans were attacked again near Whitemarsh, which resulted in their last loss of the year. Four to six hundred of General Potter's militia were routed by a combined force of British and Hessians in a skirmish, with no serious losses on either side. The militia fled in such confusion that one of the officers watched his men rush by him and then found himself in the line of fire. The officer described the troops as running full stride and discharging their weapons over their shoulders without so much as glancing back at the pursuing troops. "Conceiving myself in more danger by this mode of firing from my own men than the enemy," he called on them to cease fire.

Thus ended the engagements of 1777. Washington's army began to disperse as he moved into his winter quarters at

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48 Pennsylvania Archives, 2nd Series, XV, 216.

Valley Forge. The Pennsylvania militiamen returned to their homes. With only minor exceptions they had seen their last service in the major actions of the Continental Army.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: THE DECLINE OF THE PENNSYLVANIA
STATE MILITARY FORCES

During the first two years of the American Revolution, the Commander-in-Chief of the patriot army was forced to rely most heavily on the militia of the several colonies. Washington was confronted with the task of fighting a highly professional army with a confederation of loosely organized local militia forces, that were supported by a smaller number of poorly trained regular troops. The militias were short term participants, rotating frequently, who were undisciplined and generally no match for the British regulars. It is no wonder that Washington agitated for a more permanent military organization. In the fall of 1776, the General wrote Congress stating that, "if I were called upon to declare upon Oath, whether the militia has been most serviceable or hurtful on the whole; I should subscribe to the latter."^1

Typical to the conditions that Washington deplored was the Pennsylvania militia. Musters of the numerous Associated Companies of 1775 and 1776 bear witness to the basic problem facing the General. Representative of the average company

^1Washington's Writings, VII, 112.
in Pennsylvania is a muster of Captain John Smith's Company in the Sixth Philadelphia County Battalion. As of November of 1776, this company of eighty-eight men listed five soldiers discharged, ten lost as prisoners, seven dead, and four deserters. Another forty-one men were simply absent. Thus the organization's true strength at the time of the muster was twenty-one men.²

Acting on the urgings of General Washington, Congress took steps to raise a Continental Army with the idea of eliminating the necessity of using the militia except as an auxilliary force. To this end, Congress passed a resolve in September of 1776 requiring each state to raise a number of regular battalions with long-term enlistments. Pennsylvania's quota was twelve battalions out of a total of eighty-eight.³ As the war progressed, the Pennsylvania government devoted more and more of its efforts to the task of supplying and maintaining these Continental battalions.

After the Pennsylvania campaign in 1777, the state militia's role in the mainstream of the war became almost insignificant. General Armstrong withdrew from his command during the winter and was replaced by a former Bucks County


³JCC, V, 762. (The terms battalion and regiment were used interchangeably in this connection.)
militia officer, Lieutenant Colonel John Lacey. Apparently Lacey was not effective as a leader, and his troops rapidly deserted or used various excuses not to appear when called to duty. When Washington next called on Pennsylvania to supply militia troops he did not turn to Lacey.

In the spring and summer of 1778, the British evacuated Philadelphia. They did not leave under pressure. The command of the British troops had shifted to General Henry Clinton. The home government was dissatisfied with the efforts of General Howe, who, along with some 10,000 men, had spent a relatively pleasant winter in the city. When the news that the French were aligning themselves with the patriot cause reached Clinton, he decided that his forces were too scattered to effectively fight a major offensive war. Thus, the British commander and his army began a march across New Jersey toward New York, and the patriots regained Pennsylvania without a direct confrontation.

The American army was in exceptionally good fighting condition at the time of the British evacuation of Philadelphia. The winter at Valley Forge had been a cruel experience for the Americans, but by late spring things had changed for the better. The soldiers were finally relatively well equipped.

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5 Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 373.
and Washington had employed a Prussian officer, Baron Friedrich von Steuben, who in turn, drilled a relatively high degree of military discipline and tactical skill into the Continentals.\(^6\)

Washington decided the time was right to meet the enemy head-on and outlined a vague plan to catch Clinton’s army as it crossed New Jersey. He turned to General Cadwalader once again for tactical support. He asked the semi-retired general to collect some militiamen and to harass the enemy’s rear, while his Continental troops prepared to attack Clinton’s main column.\(^7\)

This engagement between the Continentals and the British occurred near Monmouth, New Jersey, in late June, 1778. As it turned out, the Americans proved equal to the British and the results of von Steuben’s training were evident. Although the British slipped away during the night and left the field without a decisive fight, the Americans gained a moral victory and a new confidence.

Cadwalader’s role prior to the battle of Monmouth was not so inspiring. Upon receiving Washington’s request, he began trying to raise a respectable force to carry out the General’s wishes. Despite his attempts, Cadwalader was able to raise no more than sixty militiamen for the effort.

\(^6\)Gordon, Independence, III, 67-68.

\(^7\)Washington’s Writings, XXII, 102; Ward, Revolution, II, 577.
With these men and some 300 Continentals, Cadwalader trailed the British, but there is no indication that his tiny band was disconcerting to the 10,000 man British army as it marched toward Monmouth.  

As the scene of heavy fighting moved away from Pennsylvania, the militia fell into a routine of occasional musters and general lethargy. When Washington called on Pennsylvania for 1,500 militiamen to take part in a proposed attack on New York in October of 1779, the state was unable to respond. Only the Commander-in-Chief's decision to discard the plan saved the Pennsylvania government from the embarrassing position of not being able to provide the men or equipment in compliance with the request. The state's money and supplies were directed toward the Continental battalions. The militia laws were too weak to provide men at this juncture.

In March, 1780, the Pennsylvania General Assembly wrote and passed a new militia act. The law was essentially a renewal of the act of 1777 and was the last such instrument passed in the state during the course of the war. The few changes in this act involved meeting dates, a redivision of the military districts, and the formation of an artillery battalion in Philadelphia. The loosely knit structure of the

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8 Washington's Writings, XXII, 113, 116.
9 PCH, XII, 123, 129, 144-145.
militia was not improved, and no new provisions were added to aid in developing the discipline necessary to an efficient army. 10

As seen in the preparations leading up to the battle of Yorktown in 1781, the act had no positive value in the regulation of the militia. In September, Congress called on the Supreme Executive Council to enroll as many militiamen as possible and to prepare them for any contingency. The Continental Army was preparing for a showdown with the British forces commanded by General Cornwallis. The Council issued a call for nearly one-half of the available militia in the state. 11 The troops who came forward were ordered to muster at Newtown, in Bucks County. Once again the Council found itself engaged in a futile effort. Militiamen, such as those from Lancaster County, arrived at the rendezvous point unarmed. The executive body, having no way to provide them with weapons, sent them home, commenting that such men were not only useless, but endangered themselves as well as their comrades. Finally, on October 12, a week before Cornwallis surrendered at Yorktown, the Council discharged all the militiamen at Newtown. 12 Washington presumably felt


11 PCR, XIII, 53.

12 Ibid., 70, 84.
no need to complain about the Pennsylvanians in light of his brilliant victory.

In the meantime, the other Pennsylvania state forces were undergoing changes in their status. The State Regiment of Foot, the Pennsylvania Artillery Battalion, and the Provincial Armed Boats all became a part of the Continental military establishment.

The State Regiment of Foot, commanded by Colonel Walter Stewart, was first offered to Congress in the spring of 1777, as previously mentioned. By the following November, Congress was prepared to accept the proposal, and Colonel Stewart and his men were incorporated into the Pennsylvania Continental Line and formed into the Thirteenth Regiment. The old State Regiment of Foot, which had made the notable stand near the Brandywine River in the fall of 1777, continued to serve with a high degree of success throughout the remainder of the war as the Thirteenth Pennsylvania Regiment and later as part of the Second Pennsylvania Regiment. Stewart's men were at Monmouth, Stony Point, and Yorktown, and were usually attached to the division commanded by General Anthony Wayne.

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13 See above, p. 82.
14 JCC, IX, 897.
Colonel Thomas Proctor's Pennsylvania Artillery Battalion was incorporated into the Continental Artillery in July, 1777. After leaving the service of the state, and for the remainder of the war, Proctor and his men served primarily in small detachments wherever they were needed to give heavy support. Before its attachment to the Continental Army, the Pennsylvania Artillery served with distinction at Trenton and Princeton. Proctor was not present at the battle of Trenton, but a number of his company, including Captain Thomas Forrest and Lieutenant Patrick Duffey, were in evidence. Duffey and his men moved their cannon onto Main Street and successfully controlled the thoroughfare during the heaviest fighting.

At Princeton, Proctor and a detachment of his men captured a brass, six-pound cannon, which the Colonel later presented to the Pennsylvania government.

In January, 1777, Colonel Proctor became uncertain about his rank and authority, while attached, temporarily, to General Henry Knox's Continental Artillery. His personal feelings probably hastened the transfer of the Pennsylvanians into the Continental Service. Knox, when called away from

16 JCC, VIII, 564.
his post at Morristown, turned his command over to Proctor, which placed the Pennsylvanian in the peculiar position of a militiaman in charge of Continental troops. Sensing the hostility of the Continental officers, who were obviously dissatisfied with the arrangement, Proctor made it known that he preferred some configuration that would end the distinction between fellow officers.  

One of the most colorful incidents of the entire war involved the wife of one of Proctor's sergeants during the battle of Monmouth in 1778. Sergeant John Hays was wounded while loading his cannon during the height of the fighting. His wife, Molly, who carried pitchers of water to the men, and was near his side throughout the battle, stepped forward and assumed her disabled husband's duties. An eye-witness recorded that Molly Hays was in the act of stretching to pick up a cartridge, when a cannon ball from the British side passed directly between her legs, removing her petticoats. The unruffled woman continued her task, commenting that, "it was lucky it did not pass a little higher, for in that case it might have carried away something else."  

Songs about Molly "Pitcher" have been common to artillerymen since that day.


Proctor served until April 9, 1781, and the regiment known both as the Fourth Artillery Regiment and the Pennsylvania Artillery, although most commonly as the latter, remained an organized unit throughout the remainder of the conflict.21

The Pennsylvania Armed Boats, the state supported navy, spent almost all of its brief and haphazard existence within the confines of the Delaware River and Bay area. First conceived of in the summer of 1775 by the Committee of Safety, the Pennsylvania Navy launched its first vessel on July 19. This craft, named the Experiment and measuring some fifty feet in length, was designed and built by John Wharton.22 The fleet grew from thirteen vessels in 1776 to more than fifty in 1777. In armament, the vessels ranged from boats carrying one or two guns, schooners and sloops with two to eight guns, brigs with six to eighteen guns, to ships with eight to twenty-four guns.23

The cheveaux de frize was constructed under the guidance of the Navy Board, and a select number of ships captains were given exclusive knowledge of the channels for guiding friendly military and merchant ships through the hazardous obstructions. The navy also supplied men and equipment for transporting

23 Ibid., 392-393; Pa. Archives, 1st Series, IV, 739.
Washington's troops across the Delaware for the battle at Trenton. A number of marines from several of the Armed Boats fought in the action at Princeton in January, 1777.  

The navy was plagued by desertions, frequent change of command, and even numerous instances of having sailors kidnapped by the masters of ships in the Continental Navy. An example of the latter problem is recorded in the minutes of the Council of Safety during November of 1776. Commodore Thomas Seymour complained that "the Commanders of the Continental Vessels, the Wasp and the Fly, had received and detained divers Men belonging to the Armed Boats of this State, and declare their Intentions of receiving and detaining as many more of the said men as they shall be able to obtain."  

In August, 1778, the General Assembly recommended a reduction in the size of the Navy, and the Supreme Executive Council complied by dismissing the Navy Board and selling the majority of the state's vessels. On February 13, 1781, the few remaining men were discharged, and the activities of the Armed Boats ended.  

The militiamen ended their role in the American Revolution in a state of uncertainty. When a body of furloughed Continental soldiers marched on Philadelphia in

25 PCR, X, 777.  
26 Ibid., XI, 554-555; Pa. Archives, 2nd Series, I, 238.
June, 1783, demanding back pay and a revision of their pensions, the city militia was in such condition that the Executive Council was afraid to call on it for protection. One officer, in advising the Council, remarked that the militiamen were generally in sympathy with the Continentals and might join them. However, the city troops were eventually called out, but were then quickly dismissed again when General Robert Howe arrived with 1,500 regulars. By that time Congress had fled to Princeton, and the mutinous soldiers were on their way home.  

Thus the structure and nature of the Pennsylvania militia did not require its formal dissolution at the conclusion of the war. Pennsylvania had no full-time military establishment of any sort. The militiamen were not on duty except when called in instances such as the minor rebellion in Philadelphia. In the years immediately following the Revolutionary War no changes were made in the militia laws.  

In sum, the several manifestations of state military forces in Pennsylvania served the purpose of providing men at several critical junctures during the course of the war. That these troops were generally ineffective and ill-organized should not be the sole criterion in judging their value. The

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27 JCC, XXIV, 410-411; Papers of the Governors, III, 904-911; Scharf, Philadelphia, I, 429-430.
28 Papers of the Governors, III, 951, 974, 1034.
Pennsylvania militia provided the Continental Army with officers, such as the well recognized Anthony Wayne and the little known but invaluable Walter Stewart. The state forces also provided both temporary and permanent soldiers of the line—the privates, artillerymen, and sailors. Although General Washington disliked the militia in general, it is obvious that his early campaigns relied heavily on the unreliable state organizations. As a means for gaining time while raising an army with a centralized command, the militia was a success.
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