



THE CLASS TAX OF 1782

As the Revolutionary War was nearing its end, two situations existed which acted as threats against the well-being of the Patriot cause for Pennsylvania: 1.) Money was needed to continue the financing of the war effort, and 2.) More recruits were needed for the Continental Army and the Militia.

Although the surrender of General Cornwallis in October of 1781 signalled the defeat of that British Army in America, there was no real assurance that the war was over. A slight majority of the members of the House of Commons wanted King George to end the war in America. In February of 1782 a motion was made before the House by General Conway "against any further prosecution of the American War". This motion was presented to the King in March, and he in turn responded in a round-about way by declaring that there were no objects dearer to his heart than the ease and happiness, and prosperity of his people. Such an answer did not fully satisfy the House, and debate over the issue continued for a couple months. It was not until the 5th of May, 1782 that Sir Guy Carleton arrived in New York (having been appointed to command the British troops in America in the place of Sir Henry Clinton) with the message for General Washington that the British Parliament had recently set the wheels of peace negotiation in motion. Carleton requested that a passport be issued for another British agent, Mr. Morgan, that he might carry a similar letter of peaceful intent to the American Congress, but this request was refused by the Congress on the grounds that the American government would not enter into any peace negotiations apart from its ally, France. The Americans feared that this might simply be a trick to disunite them.

In Paris, on the 30th of November, 1782 provisional articles of peace were signed which acknowledged "the united colonies of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia to be free, sovereign and independent states".

It should be noted, though, that the naval theatre of war in the Carribean was still being engaged while the peace negotiations were underway in Paris. One of the original, underlying causes of the American Revolutionary War was the importation duties and restrictions set by the government of Great Britain on sugar from the West Indies. Because the British Government would not allow the direct importation of sugar from the West Indies into the American colonies (demanding that all such traffic be routed first to ports in the British Isles and then back to American ports), the duties that the American people had to pay for this precious commodity were ridiculously high. The Americans were, understandably, unsure of the effectiveness of the peace negotiations, and would not be totally sure until the fighting, even in the Carribean, ceased. As this American Revolutionary War had developed into an international war, the negotiations for peace were complex, and were not completely resolved overnight.

The situation that Pennsylvania, and the other newly declared states found themselves in as the year 1782 began was one of unsurety. And because of the unsurety of peace, steps had to be taken to ensure that the Patriot cause not falter. As previously noted, two problem situations existed as 1782 dawned: the need for more money to finance the war, and the need for more troops because the ones already in service had had enough after some six years. The remedy for both problems was determined to be the application of a tax. It was called the Class Tax because all the residents of the various counties were divided up into numbered groups (*i.e.* classes). The *classes* were composed of roughly equal division of the inhabitants of each township area; some were large, some were small. The collection of this tax would increase the amount in the treasury. It would also aid

in determining who was loyal to the Patriot cause, and/or who was against it. This latter point being an assumption that all loyal Patriots would dutifully pay their assigned taxes, whereas Tories and Loyalists would refuse to do so.

In the early part of 1782 the Bedford County Commissioners sent the following directive to the Tax Collectors of the various townships:

"You are hereby required forthwith to collect and receive from the persons assessed the several sums in this your Duplicate respectively mentioned and shall in six ~ Weeks at least render a just and true account of and take in and pay unto us at Bedford of such sums of Money as you shall have received, and pay the whole and every of the sums of Money assessed in this your Duplicate within two Months after this Date. ~ But in Case any Person or Persons so rated or Assessed shall neglect or refuse to pay the Sum or Sums so assessed by the Space of thirty Days after Demand made, then and in such case you are forthwith to return the Name or Names of such Person or Persons so neglecting or refusing to us at Bedford in order that a Special Warrant may be issued against the said Person or Persons so refusing or neglecting agreeably to the Law in such Case made and provided ~ And herein you are not to fail under such Penalties as the Law Directs."

The Class Tax of 1782 was important because all able-bodied men (*i.e.* between the ages of 18 and 53 years) were supposed to be accounted for to pay the tax. The returns for Bedford County are stored in the Vault #1 of the Bedford County Court House. Not all township returns are extant in this collection, but the ones which do exist show a high percentage of compliance with the tax.

The returns generally listed the "delinquent" residents. In other words, the tax collector would have the listing of his township's residents, which he normally would use (such as the one taken just the previous year), and might only make a new listing of the residents from whom he could not readily collect the tax - the delinquent ones. Many of the returns, though, were complete lists of the township residents, beside whose names the tax collector would put a check mark as they were paid. The amount of tax an individual would be required to pay was based on the valuation of his property. The returns for this Class Tax generally show only the amount of the tax, and not the property valuation; the amounts were given in pounds, shillings and pence.

One last thing should be mentioned in regard to this Class Tax. The various classes within each township region were expected to supply not only their share of the revenue to finance the war effort, but also recruits for the militia or standing army (the Continental Line). Persons who refused to pay their assessed tax would be fined, and failure to pay that fine could result in a more severe fine or a court action against the individual. The township class in which an individual refused to pay would be expected to compensate for that individual's failure to comply. The form that this compensation took might be either forced payment of that individual's tax from the ranks of the rest of the class, or the recruitment of one of the able-bodied men into the militia or standing army for a period of 18 months. The threat of such action was intended (and often succeeded) as motivation for the residents of the township class to exert peer pressure on each other.

The region encompassed by the present-day counties of Bedford, Somerset, Fulton, Huntingdon, Blair and Cambria existed as Bedford County in the year 1782 (Huntingdon, encompassing the present-day counties of Huntingdon, Blair and Cambria would not be removed from Bedford County until five years later, in 1787, Somerset would not be removed until 1795 and Fulton until 1850).

For Bedford County, returns of the 1782 Class Tax for the following classes are extant and kept with the tax assessment records in Vault #1 of the Bedford County Court House:

Bedford Twp: (the central portion of present-day Bedford County) Classes 55 through 61
Brothers Valley Twp: (the eastern portion of present-day Somerset County) Classes 34 through 39
Colerain Twp: (the western portion of present-day Fulton County) Class 48
Cumberland Valley Twp: (the eastern portion of present-day Bedford County) Class 50
Frankstown Twp: (the most of present-day Blair County) Classes 11 through 21
Shirley Twp: (the eastern portion of present-day Huntingdon County) Classes 43 through 49 & 59
Quemahoning Twp: (the most of present-day Cambria County) Classes 40 through 42

1992 Meeting Schedule, Blair County Chapter

The following dates have been set up for the meetings of the Blair County Chapter, SAR for the year 1992. They are subject to change, and if that is necessary you will be notified of such.

January 11	1 st Quarterly Meeting	12:00noon	Kings Family Restaurant
February 22	George Washington's Birthday	12:00noon	Altoona Ramada
April 11	2 nd Quarterly Meeting	12:00noon	Kings Family Restaurant
July 11	3 rd Quarterly Meeting	12:00noon	Kings Family Restaurant
September 12	Constitution Day Dinner	12:00noon	(location to be announced)
October 10	4 th Quarterly Meeting	12:00noon	Kings Family Restaurant
December 5	Annual Meeting	12:00noon	(location to be announced)

The 1992 George Washington Birthday Dinner

The Blair County Chapter, SAR will host the 1992 George Washington Birthday Dinner, with guests from the Col. John Proctor Chapter, DAR and the Adam Holliday Chapter, DAR on February 22, 1992.

The dinner will be held at the Altoona Ramada Hotel and will begin at 12:00noon. The menu will include: Fruit Cup, Tossed Salad, Chicken Cordon Bleu, Baked Potato, and for dessert, Apple Pie ala mode. Margaret Goodman, Director of Fort Roberdeau will present a slide show, "Get The Lead Out". Cost for the dinner will be \$12.00 per person. Please respond by February 15 with reservations to: Larry D. Smith, RD #1 Box 704-A, East Freedom, PA 16637

EAGLE SCOUT 1990-91 ACTIVITIES (A Report By Coordinator, Joseph Ramsey)

Seventy-six Certificates of Recognition, supplied by the National Society, were given to Penn's Woods Council Eagle Scouts promoted during the period September 1, 1990 through June 30, 1991.

Five candidates applied to participate in the NSSAR Eagle Scout Scholarship Program. Four candidates completed the contest. Their submissions were evaluated by Compatriots Robert Cassidy, Edgar Hartt and Benjamin Van Horn. The Chapter's winner is Eagle Scout Joseph R. Lankard, who resides in Indiana, PA. He and his family will be invited to our George Washington Birthday Luncheon on February 22, 1992, at which time he will be awarded the NSSAR metal award.

To date, Blair County Chapter, SAR has issued 299 Eagle Scout Certificates of Recognition and two Chapter winners were PASSAR State winners during the 1988 and 1989 periods.

NOTICE

A notice, which appeared in the November 30, 1988 edition of the *Intelligencer Journal* of Lancaster, PA, was mailed to our chapter secretary, Bernard Smith toward the end of this past year, 1991. The notice was an obituary for one of our chapter's Compatriot members: Dr. Charles Kurtz. The receipt of this obituary was welcomed as news, albeit sad news. It also brought up a couple of things that every member of our chapter should keep in mind.

Compatriot Smith had attempted, over the past two years to reach Compatriot Kurtz, but with no luck. The Post Office had no new forwarding address, but letters sent to Mr. Kurtz were not returned as lacking the proper address. Without any news of Mr. Kurtz's death, we could not just assume that such was the case; the unreturned letters made no sense. The receipt of the obituary from a relative was welcomed to resolve the dilemma faced with not being able to contact him.

One of the things which this news brought was the realization that it is important for each Compatriot member to notify some relative of his membership in this Blair County Chapter, and to request that that relative be sure to notify the chapter in the event of his death.

The second thing that the obituary news brought was the problem which Past-President E. Merle Glunt spoke recently of: there was no mention whatsoever of the Sons of the American Revolution in the obituary, although it was quite a long one. It listed Compatriot Kurtz's affiliation with six other bodies, but did not even mention that he had been a member of the S.A.R. Again, assuming that the S.A.R. is something to be proud to be a part of, every member should request of a relative that his obituary should include the mention of his affiliation with this great society.

Miscellaneous Chapter News~~~~~

- ** During the 1st Quarterly Meeting, held on January 11, Compatriot Joseph Ramsey presented Compatriot E. Merle Glunt with a Certificate Of Appreciation for his past two years in office as the Blair County Chapter's President
- ** A motion was approved at the 1st Quarterly Meeting to send invitations to the Bedford County Chapter, DAR and the Standing Stone Chapter, DAR to join the Blair County Chapter, SAR in the Constitution Day Dinner. The Blair County Chapter has, in the past, invited the Col. John Proctor Chapter, DAR and the Adam Holliday Chapter, DAR to this annual event, and will continue to do so in the future. It was agreed that, in view of the fact that the Bedford County and Standing Stone Chapters, DAR exist in the same region that is encompassed by the Blair County Chapter, SAR, it would be appropriate that we invite their members to this annual event.
- ** Mrs. Beth Estelle Kurtz, recently retired Head Librarian of the Bellwood-Antis Community Library, will be honored by the Blair County Chapter, SAR with the bronze Good Citizenship Medal. Her efforts and hard work to build and sustain the library will be rewarded at the George Washington Birthday Dinner on February 22, 1992.