

Residents of the backcountry proclaim their loyalty

Undated letter in the Colonial and State Records of North Carolina, probably written March 1775.

As you read...

BACKCOUNTRY LOYALISTS

Nearly two hundred residents of the Piedmont counties of Surry and Rowan signed this letter to Governor Josiah Martin in 1775. They assured the governor that they were still loyal to the king and that they did not support the rebellion. Similar letters arrived at about the same time from Guilford County (see <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr09-0373>) and Anson County (see <http://docsouth.unc.edu/csr/index.html/document/csr09-0374>).

People in the Piedmont were divided during the Revolution — Rowan County also had one of the first committees of safety in North Carolina. The Regulation had ended only four years earlier, and former Regulators still did not trust the wealthy easterners who were leading the Revolution. Given the choice between King George and the likes of Edmund Fanning, many of them chose to remain loyal to Britain.

DATING THE LETTER

This letter is undated, as are the letters from Guilford and Anson County loyalists. William Saunders, who edited this portion of the *Colonial and State Records of North Carolina* in 1886, inserted all three letters between two documents dated March 10, 1775, and March 11, 1775. We don't know why he placed them there or what additional evidence he had (if any) for dating them.

One clue is that none of the letters explicitly mentions the war, battles, violence, or bloodshed. News of the Battles of Lexington and Concord reached North Carolina sometime in May 1775, so we can assume the letters were written before then. Since they mention *insurrection*, though, we can also assume that they were written after the Committees of Safety had begun taking over some of the functions of government in early 1775. So March 1775 seems a good guess.

[Address of sundry Inhabitants of the Counties of Rowan and Surry to Governor Martin.]

Permit us on the behalf of ourselves and many others of his Majesty's most dutiful subjects within the Counties of Rowan and Surry to protest against any person or persons who may violate any of his Majesty's Laws or the Peace of this Government. We are truly invigorated

with the warmest Zeal and Attachment to the British Constitution and Laws upon which our Lives and fortunes and the welfare of the Province now depend and we utterly protest against meetings of people against the peace thereof or anything which may give birth to sedition and insurrection. We cannot but express to your Excellency that we consider all such Associations at this Crisis of very dangerous fatality to your Excellency's good Government of this Province distress the internal welfare of this Country and mislead the unwary from the paths of their duty and we do assure your Excellency that we are determined with the assistance of God in our respective stations steadfastly to continue his Majesty's loyal subjects and to contribute all in our power for the preservation of the public peace and that we shall endeavour to cultivate such sentiments in all those under our care and warm their breasts with true zeal for his Majesty and affection for his Illustrious Family. May the Almighty God direct his Council his Parliament and all those under him that their endeavours may be for the advancement of piety and the safety, honor and welfare of our Sovereign and his Kingdom that the malice of his enemies may be asswaged, their wild designs confounded and defeated, so that the whole world may see his sacred person and Country are the special objects of Divine dispensation and Providence.

[Signed by Samuel Bryan and 194 others.]

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