

William Franklin

The year is 1779, the nineteenth year of the reign of His Most Gracious Majesty, George III, King of Great Britain, and the fifth year of the great rebellion in the British colonies of North America.

You are William Franklin, natural son of the famous author, scientist, and statesman, Benjamin Franklin. You are not entirely sure of the year of your birth, but you think that it was either 1730 or 1731. Likewise, you do not know who your mother was. Your earliest memories place you in the Philadelphia home that your father shared with his common-law wife, Deborah Read.



You are, by the standards of your time, very well educated. You are familiar with the classic works of Greek and Roman literatures, are qualified to practice law in both Pennsylvania and England, and, thanks to your contribution to your father’s scientific work, have been awarded the degree of master of arts by Oxford University. You are also a soldier, having served as a junior officer in a company of provincial infantry during King George’s War (1746-1747), a negotiator with Indian tribes during the fragile peace that followed (1748), and aide to your father during the first two years of the French and Indian War. (In 1754 and 1755, the Assembly of the Province of Pennsylvania charged Benjamin Franklin with the provision of supplies and transport to General Braddock’s ill-fated expedition, the building of forts in the Lehigh Valley, the organization of a militia, and negotiations with other colonies concerning measures for the common defense of British North America.)

Between 1757 and 1763, you lived in England. There, you studied law at the Inns of Court and you helped your father defend the interests of the provincial legislature of Pennsylvania against the “proprietors” of Pennsylvania. This involved both a great deal of face-to-face lobbying and the writing of many works of propaganda, the largest of which was a detailed treatise on the constitution of Pennsylvania.¹ In August of 1762, you were appointed royal governor of the Province of New Jersey, a position that you hold to this day. Soon thereafter, you married Elizabeth Downes, the daughter of a planter in Barbados. In the autumn of 1763, you and your new bride sailed to America.

While you were in England, a woman, whom you have declined to identify, presented you with a natural son, William Temple Franklin. You placed the child in the care of a foster family in England, which cared for him for the first thirteen years of his life. In 1775, Benjamin Franklin took William Temple Franklin with him to Philadelphia. Last year, you learned that your son was serving as secretary to his grandfather.

As governor, you strove to follow a middle way between the two formal divisions of the province, East Jersey and West Jersey. This proved easier than your attempt to strike a balance between the interests of the British Parliament and the General Assembly of New Jersey, which were greatly strained by the attempt of the former to tax the electors of the latter. Still, you managed to prevent civil strife, and hold on to your position, until well after the first shots of the Rebellion of 1775 had been fired.

On 1 April 1776, in the hope of preventing a complete break between New Jersey and the Mother Country, you called a meeting of the General Assembly. This attempt failed and, on 19 June 1776, persons acting on the orders of the Rebel legislature, which styled itself the Provincial Congress, placed you under arrest. You would spend the twenty-seven months that followed as a prisoner of the Rebels in various parts of Connecticut. (For eight of these months, you were confined to dark room that lacked both ventilation and toilet facilities. For the rest of the time, you were lodged in the homes of Rebel officers.)

After your arrest, your wife Elizabeth continued to live in your home in Perth Amboy. On 1 June of 1777, however, the outbreak of open fighting in that part of New Jersey caused her to move to the City of New York. There, on 28 July 1778, after an illness that had lasted for several months, she died.

In the autumn of 1778, you were exchanged for John McKinley, a Rebel who styled himself the governor of Delaware. Upon your liberation, you traveled to New York, arriving on 1 November 1778.

¹Richard Jackson and Benjamin Franklin, *Historical Review of the Constitution and Government of Pennsylvania*, (London: R. Griffiths, 1759)

Time Line of the Rebellion in British North America

1763

15 February: Representatives of the kingdoms of Great Britain and France sign the Treaty of Paris, thereby ending the war that began in 1754 (in the Americas) and 1756 (in Europe.)

1768

1 October: Units of the British Army land in Boston, in the Province of Massachusetts, to render assistance to civil authority

1770

5 March: Unruly citizens of Boston attack British troops guarding the Customs House. In a melée that followed the accidental discharge of a British soldier’s musket, five of the rioters were killed.

16 August: Statue of George III, created in response to resolution of the New York Assembly, erected in the Bowling Green, in the city of New York.

7 September: Statue of William Pitt, created in response to resolution of the New York Assembly, erected at corner of William and Wall Streets, in the city of New York.

1771

8 July: Lieutenant-Colonel William Tryon, late of the 1st Foot Guards and more recently governor of the Province of North Carolina, arrives in the city of New York.

9 July: William Tryon assumes office as royal governor of the Province of New York.

1772

18 March: In response to a request from Governor Tryon, the New York Assembly votes funds for the establishment of a militia.

10 June: Smugglers burn His Majesty’s revenue schooner *Gaspee*, which was, due to a mishap at sea, in distress.

1773

16 December: Vandals disguised as Mohawk Indians destroy a cargo of tea belonging to the East India Company.

1775

3 April: The New York Assembly meets. This would be the last meeting of the legitimate legislature of the Province of New York.

19 April: British troops engage Rebel militia in the countryside north of Boston.

10 May: A Rebel mob destroys the press of Charles Rivington, a printer who published material favorable to the cause of His Majesty.

17 June: Led by Sir William Howe, British troops drive Rebel militia (the self-styled “Continental Army”) from a pair of hills overlooking Boston.

23 August: His Majesty George III proclaims that many people in British North America have rebelled against him “in open arms” and commands his loyal subjects to “use their utmost endeavors to withstand and suppress such rebellion.”

4 September: Rebel forces establish a base at the Île aux Noix, on the Richelieu River, just ten miles north of the border between the provinces of New York and Quebec.

17 September: Rebel forces besiege Fort St. Jean in the Province of Quebec.

19 October: Governor Tryon takes up residence aboard *HMS Halifax*, a vessel of the Royal Navy moored in the harbor of New York.

3 November: Rebel forces capture Fort St. Jean

6 December: Governor Tryon orders that public records be placed aboard warships of the Royal Navy.

31 December: Led by Sir Guy Carleton, British troops and loyal Canadian militia inflict a decisive defeat upon Rebel forces attacking the city of Quebec.

1776

17 March: British forces in Boston conduct a successful amphibious withdrawal.

2 May: The Kingdom of France begins to provide aid to the Rebels in British North America.

8 June: Loyal forces defeat 2,000 Rebels at Trois-Rivières in the Province of Quebec. In the fortnight that followed, the remaining Rebel forces would abandon their siege of the city of Quebec, to withdraw from the city of Montreal, and retreat to their base at Fort Ticonderoga, in the Province of New York.

2 July: The Continental Congress adopts a resolution proclaiming the independence of the colonies then in rebellion.

2 July: The Royal Navy lands British troops on Staaten Island, in the Province of New York.

9 July: Rebels in the city of New York order their slaves to topple a statue of His Majesty George III. (Several months later, after the liberation of the city of New York from the rebels, unruly enthusiasts for the cause of His Majesty defaced a statue of William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, a British statesman who, thanks to his service as prime minister during the recent war with France, was popular with the Rebels.)



The Honorable William Pitt, Earl of Chatham (1708-1788)

9 July: A Rebel assembly, calling itself the New York Provincial Congress, declares the independence of the State of New York.

22 August: British troops land at Gravesend, in King’s County, on the western end of Long Island, near a village that the Dutch call “Breuckelen.”

27 August: British troops route Rebel forces in the western part of Long Island.

30 August: Rebel forces retreat to Manhattan Island.

15 September: British forces land at Kip’s Bay, on Manhattan Island, and drive Rebel forces out of the city of New York.

16 September: British forces defeat Rebel forces at Harlem Heights, in the countryside north of the city of New York.

20-21 September: A great fire destroys hundreds of houses in the city of New York.

11 October: British naval forces win battle of Valcour Island, driving Rebels from Lake Champlain.

28 October: British forces defeat Rebel forces at White Plains, in the county of Westchester, north of the city of New York.

16 November: British forces capture Fort Washington, the last Rebel stronghold on the island of Manhattan.

20 November: British forces capture Fort Lee, in the Province of New Jersey, across the Hudson River from the city of New York.

25-26 December: Rebel forces capture the small Hessian garrison at Trenton, in the Province of New Jersey.

1777

2-3 January: Rebel forces win minor victories at Trenton and Princeton. Afterwards, British forces withdraw, in good order, from southern New Jersey.

6 January; The main Rebel army takes up winter quarters in Morristown.

January, February, and March: British forces in central portion of New Jersey prevent Rebel forces in northern and southern parts of the province from making free use of forage and other local resources.

26 April: British forces under Major General William Tryon, Royal Governor of the Province of New York, destroy the Rebel supply depot at Danbury and, on the following day, defeat Rebel forces at Ridgefield, both in the Province of Connecticut.

6-7 July: British forces under Sir John Burgoyne capture Fort Ticonderoga and defeat Rebel forces at Hubbardton, both on Lake George in the Province of New York.

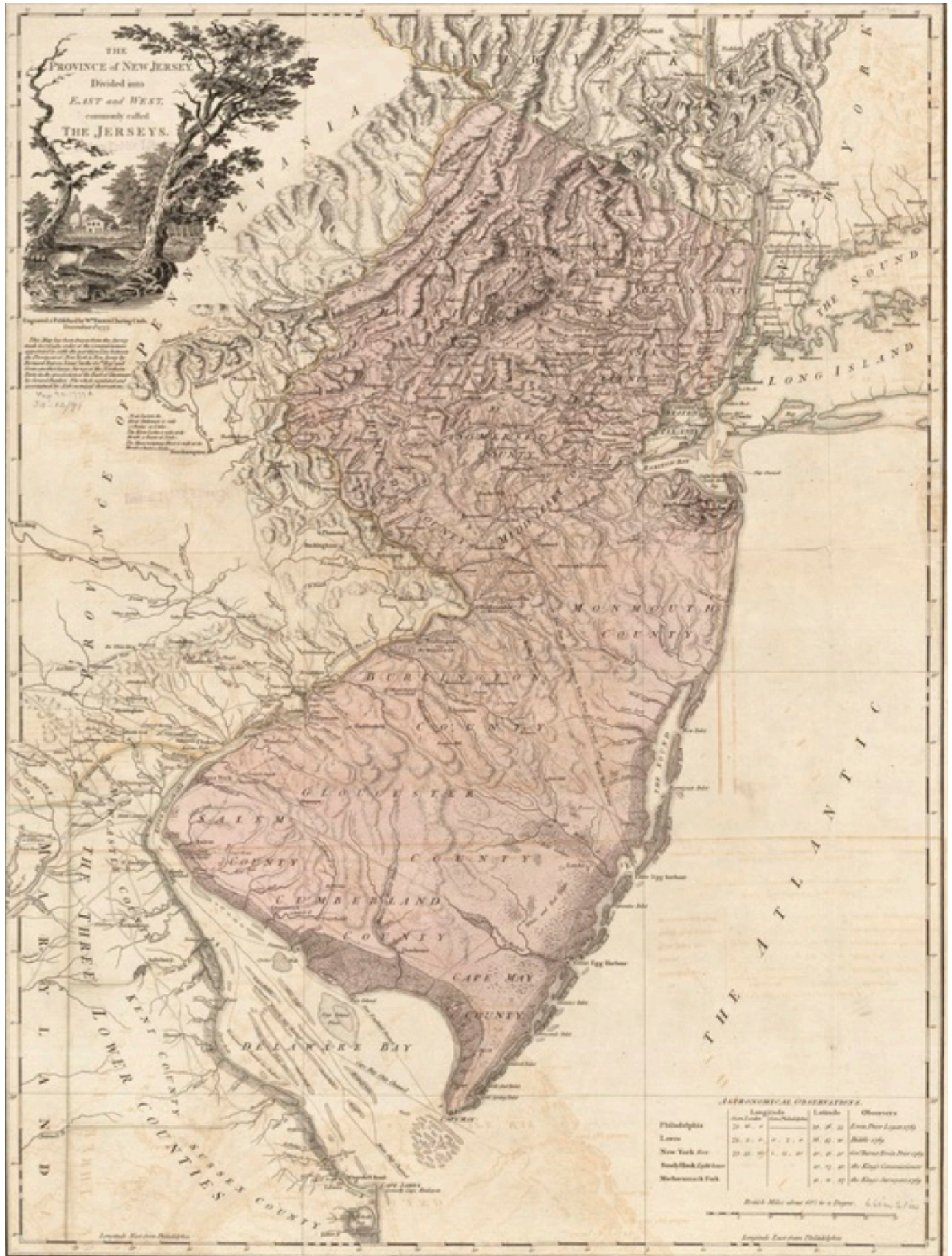
6 August: Loyal forces, composed of Hessian, Loyalist, Canadian, and British units, under the command of Brevet Brigadier General Barry St. Leger defeat Rebel militia at Oriskany, in the Mohawk Valley of the Province of New York.

26 September: British forces occupy Philadelphia.

13 October: Bereft of all means of resistance, Sir John Burgoyne surrenders to Rebel forces operating in the Mohawk Valley of the Province of New York. This takes place some 180 miles north of the city of New York.

13 October: Loyal forces conduct a successful raid against the Rebel supply base at Kingston, destroying vast quantities of wheat destined for the Rebel army. Kingston is in valley of the Hudson River, in the Province of New York, about 100 miles north of the city of New York.

22 October: A brigade of Hessian stipendiary troops, under the command of Colonel Carl von Donop, storms the Rebel fort at Red Bank, on the Delaware River, in the Province of New Jersey. The assault, which fails, results in some 400 Hessian casualties, one of which was the death of von Donop.





1778

6 February: The Rebel Legislature of the self-described “State of New York” approves the Articles of Confederation, a pact designed to promote co-operation among various Rebel groups.

6 February: The Kingdom of France extends diplomatic recognition to the Rebel government and makes a formal alliance with it.

18 June: British forces evacuate Philadelphia. Three thousand loyal subjects leave the city. Many of these take up residence in the city of New York.

24 May: Sir Henry Clinton takes command of British military forces in North America.

1 June: Captain Joseph Brant, chief of the Mohawk, leads a party of Loyal Iroquois in a successful raid against the Rebels at Cobleskill, in the Province of New York.

15 July: Elements of the main Rebel army, under George Washington, identified on both sides of the Hudson, as far south as White Plains, in the Province of New York, some 35 miles north of the city of New York.

18 July: Loyal forces under Captain Brant destroy the Rebel supply base at Andruston, in the Mohawk Valley, in the Province of New York, some 200 miles northwest of the city of New York.

21 July: The main rebel army concentrates at White Plains, some 35 miles north of the city of New York.

31 August: Loyal forces, led by Colonel Simcoe of the Queen’s Rangers, ambush Rebel Indians on the Van Cortlandt estate in Westchester County, some 17 miles north of the city of New York.



Johann Ewald, *Indian of the Rebel Army, 1778*

Artillery



Serving a Six-Pounder Cannon

Characteristics of British Field Pieces

	Six-Pounder Cannon	Three-Pounder Cannon	Royal Howitzer
Projectile	Solid Shot	Solid Shot	Explosive Shell
Horses	Four	Three	Three
Range	1,000 yards	750 yards	750 yards
Weight	900 pounds	500 pounds	700 pounds