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## “QUAKER” POLITICS IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEW JERSEY: A DOCU- MENTARY ACCOUNT\*

BY LARRY R. GERLACH

Dr. Gerlach is an assistant professor in the University of Utah, Department of History. In 1970-71 he is serving as a visiting professor at the College of William and Mary and book review editor of the *William and Mary Quarterly*.

THE structure and operation of politics in colonial New Jersey (formal and informal dimensions) remains an enigma for scholars. Unlike every other colony, where single or multiple factions or interest groups are readily discernible, New Jersey boasted no identifiable province-wide political organizations. Bernard Bailyn has written of the “milling factionalism that transcended institutional boundaries and at times reduced the politics of certain colonies to an almost unchartable chaos of competing groups.”<sup>1</sup> New Jersey eminently qualifies for inclusion in just such a category, although Jersey politics was more “fractional” than “factional.” The factions, juntos, cliques, and coteries which did periodically appear were essentially *ad hoc*; their leadership was diffuse and unstructured and they disintegrated as rapidly as they had coalesced. In short, political life in New Jersey manifested a conspicuous lack of organization, direction, and continuity.

New Jersey simply did not afford an environment conducive to the growth of viable, on-going political organizations. The myriad animosities and distinctions (intra- as well as inter-sectional) which had

\* In the *Journal* of June 1967 a fellow graduate student at Rutgers, David Bernstein, argued a different point of view from Dr. Gerlach's on the “legitimacy” of this document.

<sup>1</sup> Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York, 1968), 64.

developed for nearly three decades in the proprietary colonies of East and West Jersey were not summarily eradicated by the royal merger of 1702. Notwithstanding the fact that divisional differences tended to blur during the course of the eighteenth century, the chief legacy of the proprietary heritage was the perpetuation of such cleavages and tensions as colored many aspects of political life in the Jerseys. An amalgam of national and ethnic groups, New Jersey boasted a veritable polyglot populace. To be sure, an admixture and intermingling of stocks did occur, but ethnocentricity remained a powerful force—towns, townships, and even counties took on a distinctive ethnic character. Such pronounced social heterogeneity served to compound the fragmented nature of Jersey politics as did the profusion of religions present in that ecclesiastical Babel. The religious divisiveness which rent the province was not simply a bipolar schism between Churchmen and Dissenters or the product of intersectarian squabbles. Religious groups did not normally constitute monolithic political blocs. Instead, denominational divisions, exemplified by Old Side-New Side factionalism in the Presbyterian camp and Conferentie-Coetus clashes in Dutch Reformed ranks, were the rule. Demographically, the population of New Jersey was markedly rural and diffuse. The colony could boast of but few large towns and, unlike most other provinces, none that served as the hub of social, economic, and political activity. Consequently, merchants, artisans, urban laborers, and professionals were but few in number and did not form sufficiently distinctive classes or vested interest groups as to provide commonality of purpose and continuity of program in the political arena. Moreover, New Jersey was unique in that it possessed no newspaper to disseminate political information and mobilize public opinion. Finally, political activity in the province was decentralized, parochial, and personal. Personal and familial rivalries and ambition, aggravated by ethno-religious tensions, constituted the driving force of Jersey politics. Actuated by and attuned to local issues, politicians acted out the drama of politics on the local stage in full view of their constituents. In sum, New Jersey lacked political cohesion because of a near total absence of integrating influences.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A brief but judicious account of colonial New Jersey is Richard P. McCormick, *New Jersey From Colony to State, 1609-1789* (Princeton, 1964); for a detailed analysis of Jersey society on the eve of the American Revolution, see Larry R. Gerlach, "Revolution or Independence? New Jersey, 1760-1776" (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1968).

Within this loose, ill-defined political system, members of the Society of Friends exercised a degree of political power far greater than would appear to have been warranted by their numerical strength. This inordinate influence is attributable in large measure to the fact that Quakers, constituting for the most part a cohesive socio-political group, repeatedly took advantage of splinterings and divisions within the ranks of numerically superior forces to carry the battle of the ballots. Solidarity, or more precisely the lack of unity among opponents, was the salient factor in Quaker politics. Unfortunately, little is known about the everyday political activity in New Jersey during the eighteenth century, and even less of the role played therein by Quakers.<sup>3</sup>

A political broadside located in the Special Collections Department of the Rutgers University Library lays bare a portion of the intricate system of local politics in New Jersey, especially as it relates to Quakers.<sup>4</sup> Ostensibly an open letter from Friends in Greenwich, Cumberland County, to coreligionists in Salem County, the document purports to delineate in considerable detail the tactics successfully employed by Cumberland Quakers during the general election of 1772 to insure that at least one representative from the county to the general assembly would be a Friend. The campaign of 1772—the last provincial election to be held in New Jersey prior to the American Revolution—was an historic one for the residents of Cumberland. Because the act which created the county in 1748 did not authorize the election of assemblymen, the counties of Salem and Cumberland were jointly represented in the lower house. Now, for the first time, the Cumberland citizenry had the opportunity to elect their own representatives.<sup>5</sup> The election loomed especially large for the Quaker inhabitants of the county. Originally settling

<sup>3</sup> The standard account of politics in colonial New Jersey is Richard P. McCormick, *The History of Voting in New Jersey: A Study of the Development of Election Machinery, 1664-1911* (New Brunswick, 1953).

<sup>4</sup> *From the Weekly Meeting In G-N-H, to the Monthly Meeting in S-M*, March 25, 1772, Broadside Collection, Rutgers University Library.

<sup>5</sup> Governor William Franklin called the election for the express purpose of providing direct representation for three counties initially formed without authority to elect assemblymen—Morris (1739), Cumberland (1748), and Sussex (1753). From their creation to 1772 Morris and Sussex shared solons in the legislature with Hunterdon County; Cumberland with Salem. The act granting separate representation to the counties was passed by the general assembly in 1768 and was confirmed by the British government in late 1770. For an account of the pressures leading to direct representation for the three counties, see Gerlach, "Revolution or Independence," 90-92.

Cumberland as early as 1686, Friends by the middle of the eighteenth century found themselves a decided minority in a population dominated by Presbyterians and Baptists.<sup>6</sup> To carry the campaign of 1772 against such formidable odds without the assistance of powerful Friends in Salem would require assiduous attention by Cumberland Quakers to matters of political strategy and tactics based upon the dual proposition of maintaining group solidarity while creating fissures in the ranks of the opposition.

An absence of tangible evidence makes it impossible to ascertain with any certitude the identity of the author(s) of the broadside. On the basis of external evidence, the document appears to be an exhaustive account of the Quaker campaign in Cumberland written by Friends: it is dated March 25, shortly after the conclusion of the election; contains an accurate description of the persons, places, and events prominent in the contest; is addressed to the Salem Monthly Meeting (Friends in Salem and Cumberland for twenty-four years had collaborated closely in political matters while the counties shared legislators); describes strategy and tactics particularly applicable to Salem, where the political milieu was remarkably similar to that in Cumberland. However, internal evidence—and intuition—suggests that the publication is a sham. That is to say, it appears unlikely that the broadside was either penned by Friends or authorized by the Greenwich and Salem meetings. Instead, it seems more likely to have been an imaginative, even audacious, attempt by Cumberland Presbyterians to expose the political strategy so successfully utilized by Quakers in the recent election and thereby obviate a repetition of their success at the polls in the future.

There are several reasons for questioning the authorship of the "Quaker" broadside aside from the fact that the records of the Salem Monthly Meeting contain no indication that such a communication was received nor that a response was authorized "by order of the meeting."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most telling point is the fact of publication itself. Because the broadside was printed, one can assume that

<sup>6</sup> Alfred M. Heston, *et al.*, *South Jersey: A History, 1664-1924* (5 vols., New York, 1924), II, 956. According to a contemporary historian, the following churches existed in Cumberland County in 1765: Anglican (1); Quaker (1); Baptist (2); Seventh Day Baptist (1); Presbyterian (4). Samuel Smith, *The History of the Colony of Nova-Caesaria, or New Jersey* (Burlington, 1765), 498.

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the Salem Monthly Meeting, Society of Friends Records Center, Philadelphia.

multiple copies existed, were circulated throughout Salem and Cumberland Counties, and fell into the hands of the political opposition. Surely the printed word was an inappropriate medium to communicate privy political intelligence. More likely, such confidential information would have been exchanged orally, or at least in letter form. The very fact of printing, then, suggests that the author(s) intended to achieve a fairly wide dissemination of the contents of the document—in and of itself sufficient evidence to warrant grave doubts concerning its authenticity.

In addition to the fact of printing, the content of the broadside reveals an incredible lack of political judgment and inept technique. The document is blatantly calculated to engender the wrath and opposition of the non-Quaker elements in Cumberland and discredit Friends. On the one hand, to label publicly the Presbyterian majority “our mortal enemies”; to refer to their foremost ecclesiastical personage as a “hireling”; to designate ranking members of the community “hidden” men, possessors of “little sense,” “tools,” and an “ignorant set of dupes” is political buffoonery. On the other hand, the substance of the broadside accurately reflects the facts of political life in Cumberland and posits the formula for Quaker political victory: divide and conquer. To discuss openly such matters would be to flaunt success before other elements in the county, and could only have the effect of closing the ranks of the opposition and curtailing the effectiveness of the Quaker bloc. Politicians do not advertise the strengths and weaknesses of either themselves or their opponents nor do they wittingly antagonize their rivals. New Jersey Quakers had for years evidenced far too much acumen in the political arena to commit such egregious blunders.

Similarly, the manner in which the broadside is written raises questions concerning authorship. The style and syntax are most assuredly not that commonly associated with Quakers. The rhetoric is coarse, vulgar, and ungrammatical; the tone, vindictive, abusive, and condescending. As such it stands in marked contrast to the refined, gracious, and often ornate language commonly employed by educated Friends. Of course members of the Society were not above resorting to base vituperation and vilification in attacking political foes. Yet it seems at best foolhardy to incorporate such prose into a publication patently intended for mass consumption. Moreover, “Dear Friends” is an improbable salutation, and the pseudo-prayer

beseeking divine assistance in promoting the "cause and interest" of Quakers which concludes the document is rank blasphemy. It is inconceivable that a Monthly Meeting would sanction such a statement. One also suspects the repeated use of "thy," "thine," and "thou," constitutes a crude imitation of Quaker discourse—a suspicion heightened by the printing of pronoun references to the Deity in lower case. Be that as it may, it is clear that the document could scarcely have been written in a fashion better calculated to alienate and provoke the non-Quaker elements in the county.

Finally, it should be noted that nowhere in the broadside do proper names appear in full: only the first and last letters are printed. Since the persons and places referred to in the document were common knowledge throughout the counties, the purpose of abbreviation may be questioned. The partial spelling of names was often employed in political tracts during the colonial period not only to fashion a thin disguise, but also to avoid legal recriminations stemming from libel. This practice is understandable in the case of public pamphlet warfare, but the reason for concealing the identity of individuals mentioned in an intradenominational communiqué is unclear. Although this technique in and of itself affords no substantive clue relative to authorship, it does add to the surreptitious nature of the publication and the doubts concerning Quaker involvement.

Yet the twin questions of authenticity and authorship, while intriguing, must not obscure the primary importance of the broadside to the student of eighteenth century New Jersey politics. All available evidence points to the document, despite sundry exaggerations and oversimplifications, as being a reasonably accurate account of the provincial election of 1772 in Cumberland County. As such, it provides an invaluable glimpse into the operation of Jersey political life. The process of choosing candidates, constructing alliances, and courting the electorate reveal a considerable degree of political sophistication and organization notwithstanding the non-existence of formal political parties. However, because the county was the largest electoral unit in the colony, political organization was restricted to the local level. A rather extensive suffrage is evidenced by the expectation that "debtors" were expected to discharge a portion of their obligation politically. Moreover, politics in Cumberland apparently turned, as it did in many parts of the province, upon church and family. In an age when spiritual passions ran high, sectarian and

secular considerations often clashed on the political front; articles of faith were at times indistinguishable from political credos, sectarian organizations from secular factions. Familial pride, prestige, influence, and connections gave cohesion to political activities. Then, too, the Cumberland election demonstrates that power, not principle, was the driving force in Jersey politics. The campaign was conspicuously devoid of ideological appeals or matters of public policy. Instead, *ad hominem* arguments, red herrings, and emotional appeals dominated the contest. In sum, the significance of the broadside lies in its graphic description of the rough-and-tumble, no-holds-barred style of politics that was the hallmark of colonial New Jersey.

The 25th of the 3d Month, 1772

FROM the WEEKLY MEETING IN G[REE]N [WIC]H,  
to the MONTHLY MEETING in S[ALE]M.

DEAR FRIENDS,

We think it incumbent on us at all times, to communicate to you in much love and confidence, the wise schemes we have laid, and the favourable reception they met with at our late election. We had it much at heart to get two of our friends Assembly men, but knew it would be impracticable, as much the greater part of our county are Presbyterians (our mortal enemies) and should they unite, could put in what men they pleased; but we set all our artifice to work to divide them, which succeeded beyond our most sanguine expectations, and as we shall hide nothing from you, will give you a brief recital of them. You must know, there is as much distinction paid to the side of the creek we live on, as formerly was to Salem and Cumberland counties, when they choose Assembly men together.<sup>8</sup> We proposed our friend J[ohn] S[heppard],<sup>9</sup> who has been in trade for many years past, has many of the people in the county in debt. He has made himself very popular here of late by joining a number of the

<sup>8</sup> The Cohansey Creek divided the county into two distinct political as well as geographical sections—Quakers being predominant in the western portion of the county, Presbyterians in the eastern. When Cumberland and Salem shared assemblymen, the former tended to be controlled by Presbyterians, the latter by Friends.

<sup>9</sup> John Sheppard, wealthy Quaker merchant and ferry operator of Greenwich, exercised considerable political influence in the county as evidenced by his election to the important and prestigious post of freeholder from 1769 to 1772.

lower class of people to oppose the Magistrates (which we call the court party) [and] has likewise made a [sh]am purchase of some building lots at the bridge, [in order] that the people may think he would be in their interest, in erecting the fairs there (which they have very much at heart) he being sensible the election would soon come on: Therefore, as said above, we proposed to set him up in opposition to the Presbyterians on our side of the creek. For H[unte]r,<sup>10</sup> the Presbyterian hireling called a meeting in order to influence his people in their cause, proposed to set up one belonging to his meeting, and one [Presbyterian on] the other side [of] the creek [and] secretly enjoined it on his people to vote for no Quaker. But here we had a snare laid for them, for M[aske]ll E[win]g,<sup>11</sup> one of his Deacons, the most hidden man you can conceive of, and so avaricious, that he will take any part for the sake of interest, (for he solicited for the Stamp-Office,)<sup>12</sup> him we gained, for you know, we don't regard trifles when our cause is at stake: With him [came] all his friends and relations, which are considerable, and by this we were in [on] all their secrets. H[unte]r, had a very great opinion of him no doubt, as he was one of his head men and withall a good speaker; [Hunter] proposed he [Ewing], or S[amue]l F[ithia]n,<sup>13</sup> should be set up, [as candidates] and would have them settle it between themselves, so that the votes should not be divided (but as we observed above) no man could find out E[win]g but by interest. He would not give them any direct answer, but [said] if the leading men would give their votes for him, he would consent; accordingly they did, yet as soon as the election was opened, he told them in public, he would not suffer himself to be set up, which greatly non-plus'd them as the greater part of the people on the other side of the creek were Presbyterians; they were to send one from that meeting, in company with one from H[unte]r's. They proposed, T[heoph-

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Hunter, Sr. (c. 1715-1775), pastor of the New Side Church in Fairfield, was the most influential Presbyterian divine in the county.

<sup>11</sup> Maskell Ewing (1721-1796) of Greenwich held several important positions in county government including justice of the peace and sheriff. He also served from 1762 to 1776 as a surrogate for the division of West Jersey.

<sup>12</sup> There is no evidence to substantiate the claim that Ewing sought appointment to the post of provincial stamp distributor.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Fithian (1715-1777), a Presbyterian, lived in Greenwich. His public career included serving as a judge of the county court, justice of the peace, and sheriff as well as delegate to the revolutionary Provincial Congress in 1775.



ilu]s E[lmer]e<sup>14</sup> as a likely man to get the most votes, but he modestly refused; they then proposed T[homa]s H[olme]s,<sup>15</sup> who was very foreward and made what interest he could. Here now they had their plan laid, and would certainly succeed could we not have broke it, but we had recourse to strategem, which we shall mention hereafter.

We have a number of first and seventh day Baptists, living in our county. In order to gain them in our cause, we signified to two, the most likely to serve our turn [,] what a scandle, it would be to the other denominations, should two Presbyterians go out of the county. But in order to give you a just idea of our judgment, we will give you their true characters. One was D[avi]d B[owe]n,<sup>16</sup> a shop-keeper, near the seventh day Baptists, [who] has them in debt, and of consequence has considerable influence over them, which we knew he would exert to the utmost of his power, for his whole genius consists in getting money. The other was P[rovidenc]e L[udla]m,<sup>17</sup> Cape-May born, constitutionally a party man, [who has] just as much pride, and as little sense as we could wish: They tooke fire at our above observation (being wholly made of combustibles) and spread it through the two Baptist congregations with the greatest rapidity, which soon inflamed them all with zeal for our cause. Another artifice succeeded to our minds, by our tools we had wrote on pieces of paper, J[oh]n S[heppar]d, T[heophilu]s E[lmer]e and liberty, these we had dispersed amongst the Dutch as we have a considerable number in the upper part of our county.

We had now gained the two Baptist congregations and the Dutch, and could we gain some of the Presbyterians on the other side of the creek, we could carry our point. We concluded now our only method

<sup>14</sup> Although a member of the Presbyterian Church, Theophilus Elmer (1727-1783) of Fairfield stood above the Quaker-Presbyterian controversy and was thus acceptable to Quakers. His extensive landholdings and stature in the community made him an ideal candidate for public office; he served at various times as sheriff, coroner, and justice of the peace. Prominent in the burgeoning independence movement, Elmer represented Cumberland in the Provincial Congress during 1775-1776. The family surname was spelled either "Elmer" or "Elmere" and appears in both forms in the broadside.

<sup>15</sup> Virtually nothing is known of the life of Thomas Holmes.

<sup>16</sup> David Bowen (c. 1742-1819), a Baptist, was a prominent merchant in Hopewell Township. He took an active part in the independence movement, serving as a member of the county committee of observation and inspection charged with enforcing the economic sanctions imposed by the Continental Congress.

<sup>17</sup> Little is known of Providence Ludlam other than that he was related to one of the leading families of Cape May County, was a staunch Baptist, and owned substantial real estate in Cumberland.

would be to inflame E[lmer]'s friends, in their country cause, and join their interest with our's against the court party; accordingly we had it reported as from our friend M[iller]'s<sup>18</sup> mouth, our old Assemblyman, and much respected in the county, that should the Presbyterian party get in, they would make the College<sup>19</sup> a provincial cost. This our tool L[udla]m, swallowed with the utmost greediness, and really he was very honest hearted here, so had we told him a Presbyterian Assembly would make a law, to bring the whole Province under their church government. He knew no better; he don't know, but [that] our Assembly the[y] make laws without Governor or Council. It is his ignorance that makes him a fit tool for us; with this he went over the creek, inspired them with zeal in their country's cause, told them if the court party should get in, they would make the College a provincial cost, [and] we should be burthened with taxes, which would beggar us. This run through them like water through a conduit: they would stand by their country, oppose the court party, would set up E[lmer]e, and join his interest with our's, which they punctually comply'd with.

Another unfought for circumstance came in our favor; S[ila]'s N[ewcom]b,<sup>20</sup> [who] lives in the lower part of our county, gained great applause, as an officer [during] the last war in the provincial service,<sup>21</sup> [and who] set himself up against E[lmer]e and H[olme]s, came over to join his interest with our's, we caused it to be signified to him it would be agreeable, by which we gained all his interest which was considerable; accordingly we had some votes given to him the first day, that his interest might continue with us, but we took care not to hurt E[lme]r as his interest was the greatest. We cannot help mentioning an incident which was much in our favour [sic], it is this, that it is necessary to keep a balance of Quakers in the house for there were once some men to be raised: The Presbyterian's contended for 1000; but the Quakers gave them such opposition they

<sup>18</sup> Quaker Ebenezer Miller (1702-1774) was a long-time political patriarch of Cumberland County. A member of the influential Council of Proprietors of the Western Division of New Jersey, surveyor, and county judge, he represented Salem-Cumberland in the provincial legislature for nineteen consecutive years (1754-1772).

<sup>19</sup> The College of New Jersey (later Princeton University), which was affiliated with the Presbyterian Church.

<sup>20</sup> A Presbyterian, Silas Newcomb was a yeoman farmer in Fairfield Township. He later was active in revolutionary activities as a member of the county committee of observation and inspection; either he or his son, Silas, Jr., was a participant in the famous Greenwich "tea party" of December 1774.

<sup>21</sup> The French and Indian War or, as some would with good reason have it, the Great War for the Empire.

could get but 500, and after they had raised them, they were so burthensome [financially] they were heartily sick of it.<sup>22</sup> Something like this has been dropped from our friend M[iller]s's mouth, which gives it the greater force, though this is an affront to common sense it militated greatly in our favour, and here we can but greatly admire the gross weakness of mankind, that they do not consider, that men they trust their lives and estates with should be wise men, to know when it is necessary to raise men for their defence, and how many; but must choose men amongst us when it is contrary to our principles to oppose an enemy, though they should cut our wives and childrens' throats.<sup>23</sup> But the gross weakness of men is the upholding [of] our cause. There is one thing [that] lies heavy on our minds, which is, that an oath is contrary to the word of truth, for it says, swear not at all; how then can we make laws to impose an oath on any one? But we say, we may step out and not give our votes, when such things are on the carpet. But there is scarcely a law made, that does not impose an oath on some officer. But surely, we may clear ourselves here, for although we make the law, we do not oblige any one to execute it, and if they will swear, their blood is on their own heads. But we find we must not be too scrupulous in these points, for we find he that takes away your coat give him your cloak also: this would deprive us of the benefit of law altogether, that we could not recover our debts, which would wholly ruin our cause.<sup>24</sup> For our money and unity is our only cement.

Our schemes were now all laid, and we think well laid, for so it proved in the issue, nevertheless we kept our tools continually em-

<sup>22</sup> The account of the legislative battle over raising troops during the Great War for the Empire is apocryphal. Although the Jersey assembly did provide only half of the 1000 men requested for the campaign of 1757 by Lord Loudoun, commander of British forces in North America, there is no evidence to substantiate the contention that a Presbyterian bloc opted for filling the quota. In fact, the war was generally unpopular in New Jersey: legislators were reluctant to contribute men, money, and material to wage a war which did not seriously threaten the colony; the rural, agrarian populace did not afford a surplus of males for military duty; the colony suffered greatly when its two volunteer regiments were annihilated during the campaigns of 1756 and 1757; the province became complacent due to the unprecedented prosperity which resulted from an inflated, war-time economy. Nonetheless, New Jersey's compliance with military requisitions was outstanding compared to the parsimony of most of the other colonies. For New Jersey's contribution to the war effort, see Gerlach, "Revolution or Independence," 125-39; Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The Great War for the Empire: The Victorious Years, 1758-1760*. Vol. VII of *The British Empire Before the American Revolution* (New York, 1949), 146-47, 308-09, 446.

<sup>23</sup> This is an affront to Quaker pacifism. While some Friends actively opposed military appropriations, most Quaker assemblymen abstained from voting on such measures.

<sup>24</sup> Once again a Quaker tenet is subjected to ridicule.

ployed through the election, which gained many over to our interest by their unwearied industry. When the election was opened, our old Assemblyman [Miller] got up, and in a very pathetic speech told us, he had the good of the country as much at heart as any of us, that he could serve us no longer, as he was grown old and unable to bear the fatigue, exhorted us to chuse them that were young and robust, that should we chuse old ones, they must become young there [in the legislature]. This was very timely for the two men, the court party had in view were advanced in years, we was very cheerful to put in our votes as fast as we could, the other party was very backward, by which means we got greatly a head, which so disheartened them they broke to pieces, so we gained our point with a great majority, S[heppar]d the next highest was E[lm]er. Thus, dear friend, have we given you a true relation of our zeal in the cause we contend for which we hope and doubt not will be well pleasing to you, and we find freedom in our minds, you should communicate it to our well beloved county of Cumberland, if you in your wisdom shall think meet we make no doubt our county will greatly applaud our zeal, which we design steadfastly to maintain against all opposition whenever our cause shall require as we are sure we shall never want tools while such an ignorant set of dupes surrounds us.

Signed, by order of the meeting,

Z. O. Cl.<sup>25</sup>

*From the monthly meeting in S[a]l[e]m, to the County of Cumberland, greeting:* We have maturely considered of the above letter, and think it merits our highest esteem and approbation, as we have considered it well. Thine therefore we recommend them to thy fatherly protection, and beg thou wilt grant them thine aid, that their wise schemes may prove successful, and that thou wilt assist them from time to time, and raise up tools to promote their cause and interest which cannot fail to make thee happy and great honour redown to thy people, which is the ardent desire of thy most esteemed friends.

Signed by order of the meeting,

Cl[er]k

<sup>25</sup> It has not been possible to identify anyone with the initials "Z. O."