

Robert Patterson Correspondence to his Wife Amy Hunter Ewing, Part 1

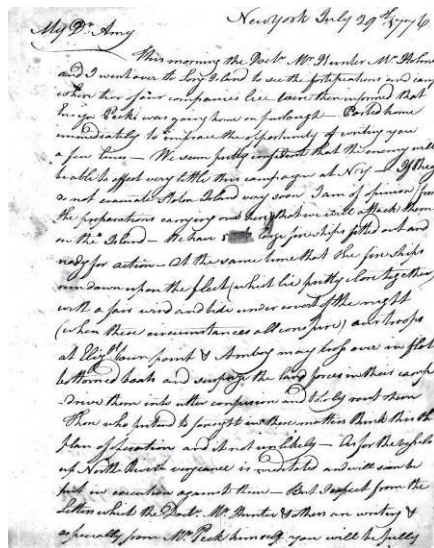
David 'Bruce' Frobes (*Frobes at npgcable dot com*)

Two years ago, while visiting the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, I found thirteen letters that Robert Patterson wrote to his wife, Amy Hunter (Ewing) Patterson, during the Revolutionary War between July 22, 1776, and September 19, 1776.¹ Robert was serving as Surgeon's Mate with his brother-in-law, Dr. Thomas Ewing, in New York City.

The letters are quite descriptive of the arrival of the British fleet, Robert's introduction to His Excellency George Washington, and an invitation to dine with Washington. Patterson also describes the retreat north to Mount Washington. In another letter Robert mentions a terrible storm of rain and lightning that kills many soldiers and citizens.² I am sure that Amy shared these letters with many other Ewing relatives in Greenwich, Connecticut.

This article provides a transcription of the letter concerning Robert Patterson and Dr. Thomas Ewing (Amy's brother) dining with His Excellency George Washington. Transcriptions of other letters will be provided in future articles.

With respect to the Revolutionary War activities discussed in this letter: There was a series of battles for control of New York City and the state of New Jersey during the Revolutionary War between British forces under General Sir William Howe and the Continental Army under General George Washington in 1776 and the winter months of 1777. Howe was successful in driving Washington out of New York City, but overextended his reach into New Jersey, and ended the active campaign season in January 1777 with only a few outposts near the city. The British held New York for the rest of the war, using it as a base for expeditions against other targets.³



Letter Concerning Dinner with George Washington, Page 1.

¹ *Private Correspondence – 13 letters from Robert Patterson to his wife Amy Patterson: from New York July-Sept 1776.* Those who would like copies of the letters can order them from the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107, +1 215.732.6200, www.hsp.org.

² David McCullough, in his book *1776*, describes this storm as a turning point in the movement of Washington and his Army. [McCullough, David. *1776*, Simon & Schuster (New York), 2005]

³ This brief explanation is taken from a Wikipedia article on the Revolutionary War's New York and New Jersey Campaign (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_York_Campaign). See that article for a more extensive discussion.

New York, July 29th, 1776

My Dear Amy,

This morning the Doctor [Amy's brother, Thomas Ewing], Mr. Hunter, Mr. Holmes and I went over to Long Island to see the fortifications and camp where two of our companies live. Were then informed that Ensign Peck was going home on furlough. Parted home immediately to improve the opportunity of writing you a few lines – We seem pretty confident that the enemy will be able to effect very little this campaign at NY – If they do not evacuate Staten Island very soon I am of opinion from the preparations carrying on here that we will attack them on the Island – We have 5 large fine ships fitted out and ready for action – at the same time that the fineships run down upon the fleet which lie pretty close together with a fair wind and tide under cover of the night (when these circumstances all conspire) our troops at Elizabethtown point & Amboy may cross over in flat bottom boats and surprise the land forces in their camp, drive them into utter confusion and totally rout them. Those who pretend to foresight in these matters think this is plan of operation and it not unlikely – As for the rebels up North River vengeance is meditated and will soon be put in execution against them – But I expect from the letters which the Doctor, Mr. Hunter and others are writing & especially from Mr. Peck himself, you will be fully informed of all things you may be desirous to know relating to military affairs.

A word or two concerning private occurrences. Last Friday had the honour with Mr. Leaman, Mr. Huff & the Doctor to be introduced by Genl Reed to his Excly Genl. Washington and were invited to dine with him.

I have seen Brooks at Meeting twice since I came here – we rubbed clothes together, he looked at me but did not speak to me nor I to him – He has been married 3 weeks – I design to pay him a visit in a few days to settle out – I suspect Nancy know nothing of it. His face carries the mark of serious guilt – I have a good mind to wring his nose – I have made up my [unintelligible] in a very genteel family in this city – two firm fat girls – a walk tomorrow into the country to drink buttermilk – Mr. Peck will wait no longer – Polly and Daddy must excuse me this time – Send me a good packet by the "Beaver" and write by every favourable opportunity as you may be assured I have – I love you –

Yours affectionately

RPatterson

Love to all