

## Loyalists and the British evacuation of Philadelphia, 1778

### Introduction

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On September 26, 1777, the British began an eight-month occupation of the city of Philadelphia during the American Revolution. This allowed British troops to spend the winter billeted in comfortable quarters, while Washington's troops suffered at Valley Forge. When France recognized the United States and declared war on Great Britain in February 1778 British war strategy changed to meet the new threat, and the army evacuated Philadelphia on June 18, 1778.

This letter of June 7, 1778, from newly promoted British army lieutenant Sam Mostyn to his patron in Wales describes some of the chaos and panic among loyalists in Philadelphia during the British evacuation. Fear of reprisals from patriots was exacerbated when, on May 8, the Supreme Council of Pennsylvania "publish'd a List of Persons whom they mean to treat as Traytors to the States of America" and ordered them to turn themselves in. As a result, some "were oblig'd . . . to leave This Town & put them selves on board the Ships, some for England and others to take their Chance with the Army."

### Questions for Discussion

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Read the introduction, view the image, and read the transcript of Sam Mostyn's letter. Then apply your knowledge of American and world history to answer the following questions:

1. Why did the British decide to evacuate Philadelphia in June of 1778?
2. Explain the emotional reaction of loyalists in Philadelphia once the order was given to the English troops to leave the city.
3. Describe the process that took place once the order to evacuate the city was given.
4. According to the letter, how did the "rebels" describe loyalists; what would be the fate of loyalists if they remained in Philadelphia?
5. Why was the evacuation an important event in the course of the Revolutionary War?

## Loyalists and the British evacuation of Philadelphia, 1778

Image

Dr. Sir

Yesterday Gen. Clinton was pleas'd to appoint me to be a Lieut. in the 4<sup>th</sup> Regt. - for which good fortune, I am & ever shall be grateful to you & your good friend Judge Barrington, who I look up to as the first Cause of what ever Success I may be so fortunate as to meet with in the Line of Life your Goodness has thrown me into. I sincerely hope your Amiable Consort and the worthy M<sup>rs</sup> & Bickton families are well & happy.

I would be glad to give you some News worth the Trouble of reading but I have none, except that the Comm<sup>rs</sup> are come, and we are in great anxiety

Samuel Mostyn to Thomas Pennant, June 7, 1778, page 1. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09023)

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To know what Plan will be fix'd upon  
 for the ensuing Campaign — Peace is  
 not wish'd at all, nor hardly talk'd of  
 as the Rebels have declar'd they will  
 not treat but as Independent States.  
 All the Goods of this Town, are put on  
 board Ships, and fallen down the  
 River by Order of the Commander in  
 Chief — Many People who fear'd being  
 left behind, have embark'd in these  
 Ships, all the heavy Baggage of the Army  
 the Women & Children are embark'd  
 also; The Rebels have publish'd a List  
 of Persons whom they mean to treat as  
 Traytors to the States of America, if  
 they will not give them selves up before  
 the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1778. <sup>Even</sup> Men to take their  
 Tryals for their several Treasons &c.  
 This has oblig'd several People To leave

Samuel Mostyn to Thomas Pennant, June 7, 1778, page 2. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09023)

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This Town & put them selves on board the  
Ships, some for England and others to  
take their Chance with the Army.

And now that I have taken up  
quite enough of your Time with my Serowl  
I shall take my Leave with wishing  
you Mrs Pennant & your good Sisters &  
family all manner of Happiness, & that  
greatest of Blessings, Health.

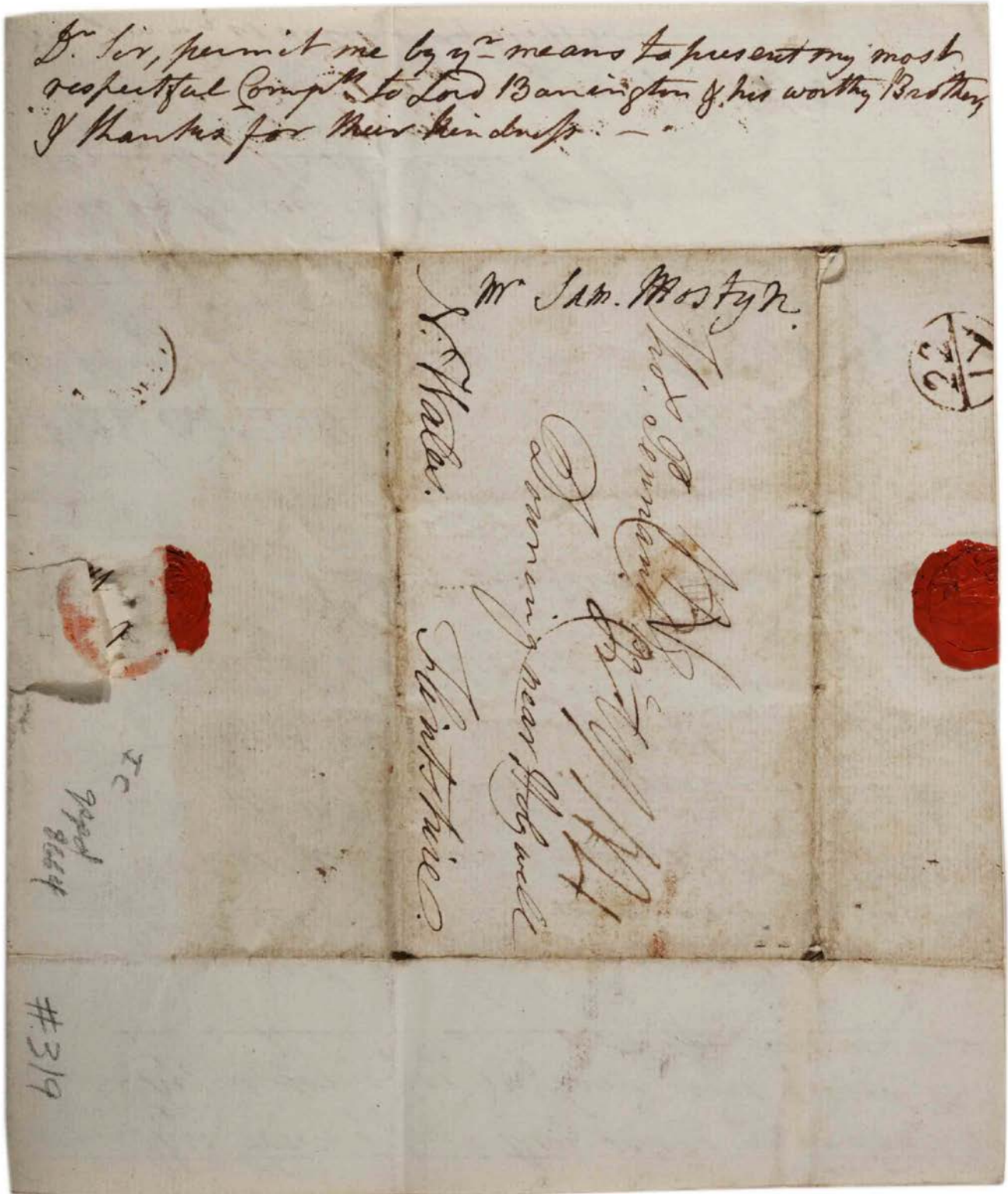
I am D<sup>r</sup> Sir, your most  
oblig'd Hum. Ser<sup>t</sup>.

I have not had the  
Happiness to hear from  
my D<sup>r</sup> Parents since I  
left England - owing I am  
sure to the Accident of my going  
over to the West Indies.

Sam: Mostyn  
Lt. Col. Regt.

Philadelphia June 7<sup>th</sup> 1778.  
My Comm<sup>n</sup> is dated May 31. 1778. -

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Samuel Mostyn to Thomas Pennant, June 7, 1778, address. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09023)

## Loyalists and the British evacuation of Philadelphia, 1778

### Transcript

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D.<sup>r</sup> Sir

Yesterday Gen<sup>l</sup>. Clinton was pleas'd to appoint me to be a Lieu<sup>t</sup>. in the 49<sup>th</sup> Reg<sup>t</sup> for which good fortune, I am & ever shall be grateful to you & your good friend Judge Barrington, who I look up to as the first Cause of whatever Success I may be so fortunate as to meet with in the Line of Life your Goodness has thrown me into. I sincerely hope your Amiable Consort and the worthy Mostyn & Bichton families are well & happy:

I wou'd be glad to give you some News worth the Trouble of reading but I have none, except that the Comm<sup>es</sup>. are come, and we are in great anxiety [2] to know what Plan will be fix'd upon for the ensuing Campaign – Peace is not wish'd at all, nor hardly talk'd of as the Rebels have declar'd they will not treat but as Independent States. All the Goods of this Town, are put on board Ships, and fallen down the River by Order of the Commander in Chief – Many People who fear'd being left behind, have embark'd in these ships, all the heavy Baggage of the Army, the Women & Children are embark'd also; The Rebels have publish'd a List of Persons whom they mean to treat as Traytors to the States of America, if they will not give them selves up before the 21<sup>st</sup> of June 1778. [*inserted: Even*] then to take their Tryals for their several Treasons &c&c. This has oblig'd several People to leave [3] This Town & put them selves on board the Ships, some for England and others to take their Chance with the Army. –

And now that I have taken up quite enough of y<sup>r</sup> Time with my Scrawl I shall take my Leave with wishing you M<sup>rs</sup>. Pennants y<sup>r</sup> good Sisters & family all manner of Happiness, & that greatest of Blessings, Health.

I am D.<sup>r</sup> Sir, your much

oblig'd Hum. Ser<sup>t</sup>.

Sam Mostyn

L<sup>t</sup>. 49<sup>th</sup> Rg<sup>t</sup>.

I have not had the  
Happiness to hear from  
my D.<sup>r</sup> Parents since I

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left England – owing I am  
sure to the Accident of my going  
over to the West Indies.

Philadelphia June 7th 1778. –

My Comm<sup>n</sup> is dated May 31<sup>st</sup>. 1778. –

*[inserted on the address leaf]*

D<sup>r</sup>. Sir, permit me by y<sup>r</sup> means to present my most respectful Comp<sup>ts</sup> to Lord Barrington & his  
worthy Brother, & thanks for their kindness. –

*[address leaf]*

Tho.<sup>s</sup> Pennant Esq –

Downing near Holywell

N: Wales. Flintshire.

*[docket]*

M<sup>r</sup> Sam. Mostyn.