

THE COUNTY AND PRECINCT COMMITTEES

The Provincial Congress established Committees of Safety in each county, and Precinct Committees were formed soon after. On 1 Sept. 1775 the Provincial Congress adopted a policy declaring that any person found guilty before any city or county committee of supplying the "ministerial army or navy" or giving information to the same, should be disarmed and fined double the value of the articles supplied; and that they should be imprisoned for 3 months after the forfeit was paid. A second offence would bring banishment from the colony for 7 years.

On 16 Sept. the Committee of Safety voted to empower the county committees to disarm all "non-associators" in order that the "destitute" continental recruits might be equipped. On 6 October 1775, the Continental Congress recommended to the revolutionary bodies that all persons whose going at large might endanger the safety of the colony or the liberty of America should be arrested and secured. The Provincial Congress revoked the power to disarm on 24 Oct. 1775 but **again on 14 March 1776 the Continental Congress directed that all "non-associators" and "Notoriously disaffected" be disarmed.**

All those who would not swear the pledge were required to turn over their arms and swear that they had no more. If they refused to swear they were fined 5 shillings per day while the militia was in service.

Every stranger was required to show a certificate from his home committee when away from home. The closing months of 1775 and the early months of 1776 were witness to the arrest and trial of hundreds of Loyalists and in the majority of instances the local Committees handled the cases. **Those men who were considered the most dangerous Tories were sent to Exeter, NH in Oct. 1776 so that they would be less apt to join the British in New York City.** [From p.3 of the minutes of the Committee and

First Commission for Detecting and Defeating
Conspiracies in the State of New York, N-YHS 2 volumes,
1924-5; hereinafter ConC; See further information on
these records below]. William Duer of the Committee
wrote to Tench Tilghman, secretary to George Washington,
on 28 Sept. 1776 saying "We have this day made a
discovery of a company enlisting in the service of the
Enemy in this County. The Muster Roll contains no less
than fifty-seven names, twenty five of whom we have
already apprehended- I am in hopes we shall secure the
remainder." He noted in a letter of 10 Oct. 1776 that
32 had been secured. [William Duer Papers at N-YHS].
[For further reading on the Committees of Safety see The
Provincial Committees of Safety of the American
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[Beekman Patent](#)