

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### GEORGE JAFFREY

Jaffrey is the only place in the world named Jaffrey but few persons in Jaffrey know much about the man for whom the town was named. Homer J. Belletete of the Jaffrey History Committee developed a genuine curiosity about what manner of man the town was named for. Belletete contacted the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston from which he received a courteous reply and the following sketch of Hon. George Jaffrey. In further correspondence with the Society he received its permission for the use of the sketch in this volume, dependent, of course, on the author's consent. The author of the sketch, Clifford K. Shipton, of Shirley Center, Massachusetts, graciously permitted the use of his sketch, which follows on these pages. A likeness of Hon. George Jaffrey from a portrait by John Singleton Copley appears opposite page 112 of Volume I.

The Honorable George Jaffrey of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, was a son of Chief Justice George (A.B. 1702) and Sarah (Jeffries) Jaffrey of New Castle and Portsmouth. He was born on February 8, 1717/8, and baptized at the North Church two weeks later, when his father owned the covenant. The only unusual thing about his college record is the fact that he was fined and twice publicly admonished for playing cards and dice. In the college Hall on March 19, 1735/6, he pronounced the valedictory oration of his class. Thence he went straightway to his father's warehouse, where he so busied himself that it is not surprising that when he emerged in 1739 to take his M.A. he was prepared to hold against all challengers at the Commencement exercise the affirmative of "An Postestori facultatum copiae, Mercaturas facere expediat?"

Judge Jaffrey had long been a leader of the New Hampshire oligarchy which was battling Governor Jonathan Belcher (A.B. 1699) and trying to dissolve the union of their province with Massachusetts. The Judge made the breach wider by joining Queen's Chapel (the Governor disliked Episcopalians) and by taking his second wife Sarah, widow of Archibald MacPhedris, and daughter of Lieutenant Governor John Wentworth. However, "the Loon," as Belcher regularly called the Judge, had guessed right; the Gov-

ernor fell, the provinces were separated, and Jaffrey became senior member of the Council with the title of "President."

George during this decade buried himself in his father's private and public business. At one moment he was a warehouse clerk or a messenger, but the next he was a man of large business affairs or a downy-cheeked Justice of the Peace. To qualify him as a voter in town meeting, the Judge conveyed to him an old house, but continued to pocket the rent himself. George was a restless man, and had a theory, with which his father did not agree, that money ought to be kept at work. It was with difficulty that he got his father to give him a fourth part of the family capital with which to trade. With this he occupied himself while his companions took wives and got themselves children.

The Judge allowed George so little independence that one cannot be sure whether it was the father or the son who conceived and executed the plan for the purchase of the two hundred thousand acres of New Hampshire land owned by John Tufton Mason. At all events, George was active in the project from the first. In 1748 he was appointed clerk of the proprietors, an office which he was to hold for fifty-five years. As such he was both the chief proprietor and the executive officer of the board, busy for many years employing surveyors, searching out trespassers, selling land, executing deeds, and prosecuting suits in law. Of the scores of towns in the affairs of which he was active, one was named "Jaffrey" for him.

This self-sufficient activity was a matter of slow growth, however. George's first reaction to the death of his father in 1749 was, as he wrote to his Uncle Jeffries, that he had lost his "Support and Protection":

As you are my next Friend and Relation I hope and trust you will consider my Condition of being left alone in an ill natured World without a sincere Friend, to depend upon, and in this new Scene of life, where I am deprived of that Shelter and Protection from many Evils which my deceased Parent was to me at all times; I pray you and My kind Aunt will not withdraw your wonted kindnesses but look on me as an Object needing the Assistance of the Counsel and Advice of such Friends.

He sent no less than £100 to his Boston relatives to be laid out on such funeral ornaments as "a Hatchment and light Scutcheons" to be carved by Johnson. According to George, his father had intended to leave him the bulk of the family estate, but had died leaving his will unfinished. Consequently he received only the eldest son's two shares of a £10,000 estate, which in this case consisted of the the mansion house and lot, the wharf and warehouse. His step-

mother waived her rights as administratrix, leaving the business in his hands. His procrastinations enraged the husbands of his sisters, and gave rise to a mass of bitter family correspondence, of which this letter from one brother-in-law to another is a sample:

George has so behav'd, that I do not look upon him in the Light of either Brother or Friend, nor will I allow him the Liberty of a Companion not having spoke to him since his promise of shewing me the watch and Ring, which he never perform'd . . . I . . . have already acquainted my Brother, he is the Reverse of Everything that was amiable in his Sister . . . and Believe you are of my Sentiments.

In time the family storm abated.

Tradition has it that Jaffrey lived and died a bachelor, but in fact he was married, at the Brattle Street Church in Boston, on November 10, 1758, to Lucy, a daughter of Adam (B. 1694) and Anna (Wainwright) Winthrop. Lucy was a shadowy person who bore no children and permitted her step-mother-in-law to run the mansion, which she did so efficiently that it was said that one could not find enough cobwebs in the house to put on a cut finger. They lived comfortably but not elegantly, for the Jaffrey fortune has been exaggerated. Their town taxes run about £12 a year, less than was paid by some two dozen other households. Lucy died on January 10, 1776, after a short illness of a fever.

Because of his father's position, George had been in public business almost from the day of his graduation. In 1744 he succeeded Benjamin Gambling (A. B. 1734) as Clerk of the Superior Court. His father had been treasurer of the Province, and upon his death Governor Benning Wentworth (A.B. 1715), his stepmother's brother, put the office into the hands of a commission of two, who were George Jaffrey and Richard Wibird (A.B. 1722). The latter declined the office, but George, in spite of the problems surrounding the settlement of his father's estate, plunged willingly into the pressing task of issuing the tax warrants. For fourteen years he transacted the business of the treasury without an assistant, but in 1763 the House instructed him to hire an assistant to carry the tax warrants to the Selectmen of the towns and parishes. Three years later he was appointed to the Province Council, a comfortable family circle.

When the Revolution broke, Jaffrey would neither participate nor go into exile with his cousin, Governor John Wentworth (A.B. 1755). An uncompromising Loyalist, he was several times molested by the mobs, but he refused to run. When the local shooting be-

gan he told a friend that he could not think of leaving Portsmouth because of the "great Confusion owing to some rash fellows, the other day firing on the Man of War's barge." Whigs who might have used violence against him were deterred by his fearlessness, and by his reputation for correctness, punctuality, and strictest integrity in business, public affairs, and social life.

The problem of separating Jaffrey from his public offices was solved when he declined to follow the Assembly to Exeter, a removal which to the old oligarchy was in itself a revolution. Early in June, 1775, he surrendered £150 of the Province money to a committee of the Committee of Safety: but that was as far as he was willing to go. On August 25, 1775, the Provincial Congress ordered him to lay the treasurer accounts before it on the following Tuesday. He replied, giving as an excuse for his failure to comply the fact that he was for safety moving from Portsmouth to North Hampton and could not readily get at his accounts; but then he proceeded to question the authority of the revolutionary Congress:

As a Provincial Officer, constant and invariable Custom necessarily obliges me, to render my Treasury Accounts to the General Assembly, who with the Other Branch of the Legislature Settle those Accounts by which Method the Settling the Treasurer's Accounts they only, with consent of the third Branch of the Legislature can give the Treasurer a Discharge — So that any Settlement by the Congress, would not prevent the Requisition of a Settlement by the general Assembly and the other Branches of the Legislature — it would be a Case very Singular and unknown, that the Treasurer should be accountable, to two Seperate and different Authorities in the Same Province . . . I hope the Congress will candidly consider the Situation of the Province Treasurer, and be Satisfyed with the Settlement of his Accounts by the general Assembly.

The Deputy Secretary to whom this letter was addressed did not receive it promptly or did not think it was wise to bait the Congress with it. But that body, naturally miffed, sent a more peremptory order for him to appear with his accounts. Again he sent excuses. The Congress voted that these were unsatisfactory, and sent the Reverend Elijah Fletcher (A.B. 1769) to inform him that if he did not immediately come with his accounts, further notice would be taken of his contempt. So far as the record shows, he successfully maintained his point.

The Congress, which was beginning to get the idea that Jaffrey was a Tory, on November 15, 1775, ordered that he should remove himself to a place at least ten miles from Portsmouth, and that

he should not leave the bounds of the town or parish in which he settled. He had friends among the rebels, however, for two weeks later General John Sullivan (A.M. 1780) wrote from the camp on Winter Hill to the New Hampshire Committee of Safety:

Gentlemen Since I Saw you Last I find that George Jaffrey Esq. has assisted much in fixing the works to Defend our Harbour — That being the Case I am Clearly of opinion that he ought not in Justice to be Deemed an Enemy to his Country or treated as such. I therefore Consent that he remain at his own House in Portsmouth if agreeable to you.

In December the Congress went further and voted to allow Jaffrey to travel on business for fifteen days, reporting back in person. Before that time was up, he was freed from confinement "until further orders."

Whatever may have been the secret of Jaffrey's success in dealing with the rebel Congress, or rather in his refusing to deal with it, it was not a obsequiousness. In August, 1776, he refused to sign the Association Test, and he was always ready to maintain vigorously that "we never ought to have come off" from England. On January 3, 1777, the House of Representatives asked for the Treasury accounts in his hands. This being, from his point of view, the legitimate government, he complied; and with his records surrendered £963/3/2/1 in cash. His next step was to demand compensation for damage done to his house while it was occupied by soldiers in 1775 and 1776, and in this he was successful. It was not until 1785 that a committee of the House and Senate called upon him for the return of the official weights and measures of the Province. Seven years later he submitted a bill for the damage done to his land in New Castle by the building of the fort on it in June, 1775.

During the War and for some years after, the Mason proprietors remained very quiet, fearing a general confiscation of their wilderness land. When a settlement was reached in 1794 they were relieved to find that each owed the State only £240 with interest. Still Jaffrey was so reluctant to pay that the General Court had to threaten to sue Him.

The Dartmouth College charter of 1769 named Jaffrey a trustee, and he qualified at the next Commencement. Because he was accustomed to traveling the wilderness on the business of the Mason proprietors he did not, like some of the other Portsmouth members, begrudge the two weeks required to attend a meeting of the Board of Trustees at Hanover, nor was he frightened by accounts of

hostile Indians on the road. In 1773 he presented to the college the Nathaniel Hurd seal which it still uses. He sent his nephew, George Peirce, to Dartmouth, and was active in raising funds for building. He resigned from the Board of Trustees in 1788.

In that same year the S. P. G. named Jaffrey a trustee of the New Hampshire lands which it transferred to the Protestant Episcopal Church. He was then a Warden of Queen's Chapel, although not distinguished for piety. Back in the days of the Great Awakening he had disliked the revivals, and he always regarded oral prayer as hypocrisy. Once Parson Browne came upon him in a fit of profanity and remarked, reprovingly, "I am surprised, sir, that you should so soon, after denouncing praying men as hypocrites, be found offering to God a petition." Once he was sitting in church brooding over the encroachments of squatters on the Mason lands when Parson Browne read as his text, "Cursed be he who removeth his neighbor's landmark." Jaffrey startled the congregation by roaring. "Amen."

During the generation following the Revolution, Jaffrey was a Portsmouth landmark. Five foot seven tall, and portly, he always wore a red cloak, smallclothes, and heavy gold shoe buckles. He was a willing historical source for men like Ebenezer Hazard and Jeremy Belknap (A.B. 1762). His one close friend and heir expectant was Colonel Joshua Wentworth, who, however, lacked his own fanatical sense of financial propriety. So, when the Colonel unexpectedly proved unable to meet his indebtedness to the government, Jaffrey paid up for him, but cut him from his will. He then turned his attention to his grand-nephew, George Jaffrey Jeffries (Class of 1802), son of John Jeffries (A.B. 1763), once a Tory refugee, now a substantial physician of Boston. He broke the news to the Doctor one day in July, 1798:

On Road from Portsmouth to Boston, Uncle Jaffrey mentioned to me (wholly unknown to me before) his Design to give to me and my Child or Children his Estate in Portsmouth, on Condition that such child should have his name legally changed to George Jaffrey and become a resident or chiefly so, at Portsmouth — mentioned that he esteemed me as his nearest relation and in whom he could and did put confidence — accompanied him to view etc his Pastures and improvements.

Perhaps George Jaffrey was Conscious of the fact that in spite of his coat-of-arms he was only the third generation from a poor Scotch factor; or perhaps he felt that he had missed something by working too hard. At any rate, he insisted that his heir agree

to follow no profession but that of being a gentleman. He died on December 25, 1801. George Jaffrey Jeffries changed his name, and succeeded to the estate. From it there still survives the Blackburn portrait here reproduced from the original in the possession of Mr. J. Amory Jeffries (A.B. 1916).