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(American Revolution) [Original manuscript account book kept by John Agnew, Clerk of the Quarter Sessions and Justice of the Peace, Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, recording sales of supplies destined for Washington's army during the American Revolution]

Stock#: 95483
Map Maker: Agnew
Date: 1775 - 1788
Place: Carlisle, Pennsylvania
Color: Uncolored
Condition: Good
Size: 4 x 6.25 inches
Price: \$ 7,500.00



Description:

Revolutionary War Manuscript Record Book, Carlisle, PA

A Hub of Logistical Support for Washington's Continental Army

Buying Tobacco from George Washington's Nephew, William Augustine Washington

A compact Revolutionary-era manuscript account book well-filled with entries by John Agnew, a Carlisle merchant who also served as clerk of the quarter sessions and justice of the peace in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Notably, some of the transactions recorded herein are for essential materials destined



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for George Washington's Continental Army during the pivotal years of the American Revolution. Stretching from July 1775 to September 1777, with additional content dating from 1778 to 1788, the manuscript entries shed light on the logistical challenges in supporting the Continental Army during a time of intense upheaval and conflict. One interesting July 27, 1775 entry records the purchase of 4 hogsheads of tobacco from George Washington's nephew, William Augustine Washington, a Virginia planter who also served as a colonel in the Virginia militia.

Washington's army underwent tremendous strain throughout the conflict, including harsh winters encamped in locations like Morristown, New Jersey and Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Maintaining the army's morale and fighting capability was partly supported by the individual states, who were required to provision their own regiments. Agnew's manuscript record book presents evidence of this provisioning effort in the area of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. In fact, Carlisle, where the manuscript originates, was an essential logistical hub for the Continental Army. During the Revolution, the Continental Army Quartermaster Department had personnel in Carlisle. As a merchant in Carlisle, it makes sense that John Agnew would have been involved in transactions for provisions destined for the army. Indeed, the volume records transactions for items such as liquor, flour, salt, soap, wood, whiskey, pork, and beef. The transportation of such supplies for both Continental line and militia troops from Pennsylvania and other state militias was handled from Carlisle by Col. John Davis, a Deputy Quartermaster General, and his assistant Samuel Postlethwaite (Davis is mentioned in the present record book). The focus of the supply efforts from Carlisle was west of the Susquehanna River, particularly to Fort Pitt. In addition to transactions concerning provisions, the record book includes lists of men who may have worked as wagoners, an essential task in the movement of goods via teams of packhorses. The volume lists the names of dozens of local individuals in Carlisle, many of whom were likely involved in such transportation work.

John Agnew

John Agnew (c. 1732-1790), a Carlisle merchant, first served as a provincial justice of the peace in Cumberland County in 1770. He retained this position under the new Revolutionary Pennsylvania government, while also becoming clerk of the quarter sessions. During the war, he also served as a member of the Cumberland County Committee of Correspondence. In 1784 he was appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas.

The volume begins with entries dated July 1775, recording names of plaintiffs and defendants in court



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cases, and the fees paid. Several of the cases mention "The King" v. various individuals, while others mention the Orphan's Court and guardianship cases. On July 27, 1775, Agnew records that he "bot of Col. Washington 4 hhds. Tob[acco] at 18 p hund. Virginia Curr'cy. Paid him £36 - 0 - 0." This was almost certainly Col. William Augustine Washington, a Virginia planter and George Washington's nephew (not Lt. Col. William Washington, a hero of the Continental Army, who was also related to George Washington). Other fees recorded herein relate to tavern licenses, writs, and judgments. Sales of state lottery tickets are recorded in 1777 and 1778, and 2d class United States lottery tickets in 1780.

An entry that begins "Provision Acct. commencing 4th July 1777" includes payments for liquor, "flower" [sic], salt, soap, wood, and whiskey. During the period between January - April 1778, there are also entries for pork and beef. Additionally, there are several receipts recorded for goods and services provided to Agnew for stacks of hay, cords of wood, notes payable, and the like. One signed by Jas. Mitchell records a purchase at Carlisle on 24 May 1777: "recd from John Agnew thirty pound seven shills & sixpence in full cash I left with him when I went to Camp in Winter." It is quite likely that the above transactions relate to provisioning the Continental Army. General Washington took his Army into winter camp at Morristown, N.J. in February 1777, following his victories at Trenton and Princeton. The following winter, by December 1777, Washington encamped at Valley Forge. As mentioned above, Carlisle had been identified by the fledgling Continental Congress as a hub for logistical support for the army, likely due to its iron forges and abundant agricultural resources.

An entry dated February 16, 1781, lists approximately 36 local names, including several officers. This is followed by a census-like recording of people, perhaps wagoners involved in the transportation of supplies: Conrad Hague: 4 men; Jacob Swem: 1 man & wife, 2 servts.; John Anderson: 3 men; Col. Ferguson, 1 man [etc.] Another page lists a group of officers, Col. John Davis, Capt. Becker, Capt. Campbell, Capt. Henderson, along with several other local men, without ranks. Col. John Davis, mentioned above, commanded Cumberland County's 2nd Battalion during the American Revolution. He also served as Deputy Quartermaster General for central and western Pennsylvania, appointed in 1778. His assistant quartermaster was Samuel Postlethwaite, who later succeeded John Agnew of the Quarter Sessions, and was Agnew's executor. See "Samuel Postlethwaite: Trader, Patriot, Gentleman of Early Carlisle" by Carla Christiansen, *Cumberland County History*, vol. 31, 2014.

Two pages near the end of the volume record marriage license payments: Cpt. James Culbertson with Margaret Smith; John Johnston with Ann McDowell; and on Dec. 24, 1783, Dr. John Wilkins with Catherine Stevenson, among others. The latter was likely John Wilkins, Jr. (1761-1816), a Carlisle boy who enlisted at



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age 15, and served as Surgeon's Mate in the 4th Pennsylvania Regiment until the close of the war, earning the nickname "Doctor." Wilkins then worked as a merchant and contractor in Northwest Territory. In June 1796, Washington appointed him Quartermaster General of the United States Army, a position he held until March 1802, when the post was abolished as part of a downsizing of the Army.

Lieut. Col. William Washington and the "Quaker Cannon" at Rugeley's Mill

A curious period newsclipping laid down on the rear pastedown prints William Smallwood's account, addressed to Gen. Nathanael Greene, of an action involving General Daniel Morgan and Lieut. Col. William Washington, of the Continental Army, and a second cousin of George Washington (this William not to be confused with the Virginia planter William Augustine Washington, also mentioned in the record book). Smallwood describes the surrender of British troops at Rugeley's Mill, 13 miles north of Camden, South Carolina. Lieut. Col. Washington managed to force the surrender of a fortified Loyalist-held homestead by fashioning a "Quaker Cannon" in the form of a tree trunk mounted on wagon axles:

The Colonel's address and strategem on the occasion deserve applause; having no artillery, he mounted a pine log, and holding out the appearance of an attack with a field-piece, carried his point, by sending in a flag and demanding an immediate surrender.

Rarity

John Agnew's manuscript account book stands as a valuable primary source reflecting how everyday people supported the Continental Army during American Revolution. Such original historical manuscript record books, dating from the years of the American Revolution, are rare in the market.

Detailed Condition:

16mo. Contemporary hand-sewn calf covers, with exposed early stitching on spine. Internal hinges separated, but binding holding together by the old spine stitching. 118 pages of manuscript entries (plus numerous scattered blank pages), dated between July 1775 and September 1777, then sporadically from 1778-1788, in a legible hand. Includes dozens of names mentioned in the entries, recorded amongst the court case listings and other records. Binding quite worn, but entirely intact. Internally clean and very nice. Overall condition is nearly very good.