
Gerald W. Thomas, a native of Bertie County and retired federal executive, has produced a thoroughly documented and well-written account of his home county’s role in the Revolutionary War. Most counties in North Carolina are fortunate if they have one professionally crafted history. *Rebels and King’s Men* is Thomas’s third local history title, having published similar works on Bertie County during the War of 1812 and the Civil War. Together with Alan D. Watson’s *Bertie County: A Brief History*, also published by the Office of Archives and History, Thomas’s books make an outstanding contribution to knowledge of Bertie County’s past.

One of the strengths of the book is the degree to which it places local history in the context of state and national events. Thomas carefully explains the causes of the Revolution, the unrest in the colony that preceded the war, and the trials and tribulations of both the American and British troops during years of conflict. He provides key information about the strategies employed by the opposing forces and explains how troops from Bertie County, both Continental volunteers and drafted militia, were raised and deployed. Of particular interest are the diligent efforts of the state of North Carolina’s first governor, Richard Caswell, to carry out legislative mandates to obtain fresh recruits—an increasingly difficult task. Bertie County men served with General George Washington in the Middle Atlantic States and saw action also in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia as the war wound to a conclusion. Thomas provides surprisingly detailed information about the involvement of Bertie County troops in specific battles as well as their sufferings and casualties.

The book provides insights into the activities of Loyalists during the Revolution. In particular, Thomas describes the conspiracy led by John Llewelyn of Martin County to undermine the Whig cause. In several northeastern counties, including Bertie, the conspirators initially sought to protect the Anglican Church; they also vowed to protect those who suffered because of their loyalty to the British crown. Later they developed a plan to resist taking required oaths of allegiance to North Carolina’s fledgling government. Llewelyn even considered the possibility of inciting slaves to rebel and of capturing Governor Caswell. Whig leaders discovered the conspiracy, however, and put it down. Some of the leaders were arrested and tried, but none was executed. Most left the state.

The story of Bertie County during the Revolution comes to life as a result of the author’s meticulous research in primary and secondary sources. The extensive bibliography reveals Thomas’s use not only of such published sources as *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, but also of county and state records at the State Archives of North Carolina and record groups at the National Archives. Many records concerning the service of North Carolina troops have been lost, but Thomas made a serious effort to compile rosters of Bertie men who fought in different capacities. The appendices listing these men are a valuable addition to the book.
Rebels and King's Men: Bertie County in the Revolutionary War, which contains a useful index and thirty illustrations (including portraits of military leaders and maps of battles in which Bertie County men participated), is a model local history. It is recommended for academic libraries. Public and high school libraries in northeastern North Carolina may wish to acquire this important book.

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