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*Sketch of a successful British penetration at high level into the American Revolutionary effort.*

**EDWARD BANCROFT (@ Edwd. Edwards),  
ESTIMABLE SPY**

The American Revolution, as John Bakeless illustrates with copious detail in his recent book,<sup>1</sup> teemed with spies and undercover agents, military and political, on both sides. What often seems surprising, in the hindsight of the current age of highly organized espionage, is that rather inexpertly camouflaged penetrations went undetected by those on the other side astute enough to employ clandestine means themselves, who therefore should have known what to expect of the enemy. Certainly a man with Benjamin Franklin's reputation for astuteness should not have been taken in and milked for years by a British agent making his maiden venture into espionage. Yet Edward Bancroft, whom Franklin appointed, worked with, and defended as private secretary to himself and Silas Deane, American commissioners in Paris, did just that, with untold damage to the American cause. Praised, accused, and vindicated, he maintained his cover almost in perpetuity. When his agent role was unmasked he had been dead for 68 years.

The story of this man of many talents has never been assembled and published in one piece. Sufficient material is extant, however, scattered in scholarly papers on the history of the times, to afford glimpses of his life and the outlines of his potent espionage activity against the Americans in Paris, made possible by his native ability and abetted by the failure of Benjamin Franklin and others to take the most elementary counterintelligence precautions.

*Recruitment of a Polymath*

Bancroft was born in Westfield, Massachusetts, on January 9, 1744. Little is known of his childhood and youth. Although it has been said that he had no formal education,

<sup>1</sup> *Turncoats, Traitors and Heroes*, reviewed in *Intelligence Articles IV* 1, p. 101.

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there is some evidence that he was once a pupil of his future employer Silas Deane, formerly a schoolmaster.<sup>2</sup> This circumstance, if true, may have contributed to the close relationship which later developed between the two men. Bancroft did not remain long in his native country, for before about 1766, when he took up residence in England,<sup>3</sup> he had served as a sailor and had stayed long enough in Dutch Guiana to gain considerable knowledge of the natives' habits, customs, and religion: in 1769 he wrote a treatise on this subject that gained him scholarly acclaim.

In England he studied medicine and was ultimately elected a member of the College of Physicians. His interests were by no means confined to medicine, however. He was a contributor on American subjects to the *Monthly Review*, and he became an editor of this periodical. In 1769 he published his *Remarks on the Review of the Controversy between Great Britain and her Colonies*, which helped considerably to establish his reputation as an authority on that vexatious problem. It was through his writings that he came to know prominent men like Doctor Priestley and Benjamin Franklin. His attainments in scientific work won him membership in the Royal Society, and in the technological field he became something of an inventor in the processing of textiles.

These slim facts, about all that is known of his life outside his activities during the revolutionary period, are sufficient to establish that he was an unusually versatile and accomplished man. Because of his work as doctor, scientist, anthropologist, and political historian, he came to the attention of important men of the times and was welcomed into the most exclusive circles of the enlightened, cynical society of 18th-century Europe. About his personal life we know even less than about his several professional careers; and we can only guess what motivated him to add espionage to his list of professional accomplishments. It seems probable that money was a factor: he gambled on the stock exchange, and some of his writings indicate a strong concern and an occasional anxiety for the sources of his income.

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<sup>2</sup> "Edward Bancroft," in *Dictionary of American Biography*, Johnson, et al., editors, Vol. 1, pp. 563-564.

<sup>3</sup> See his "Memorial to the Marquis of Carmarthen," in *American Historical Review*, XXIX, pp. 493-495 (from Stevens Facsimiles).

The immediate reason for his turning British spy was apparently his friendship with Paul Wentworth. This man, a member of a famous New Hampshire family, had spent many years in England, and when the Revolution came he cast his lot with the mother country. His connections were such—he was related to the Marquess of Rockingham—that he rose high in court circles and was offered an important job in the British Secret Service. He bargained well, agreeing to work against American interests only on the assurance of getting in addition to his salary a seat in Commons and a baronetcy, these to be tendered at the end of hostilities. Bancroft himself says<sup>4</sup> that it was Wentworth who first approached him on the matter of giving information to the British concerning American negotiations in Paris, and his statement has been accepted by historians.<sup>5</sup> There is documentary support for it in the fact that his contractual agreement with the British Secret Service was prepared in Wentworth's handwriting.<sup>6</sup>

This agreement, not made until some six months after Bancroft had begun reporting to the British in July 1776, committed His Majesty's Government to pay him a sum of money outright and several hundred pounds per year thereafter in return for specified information to be supplied to Wentworth and to Lord Stormont, King George's Ambassador in Paris. How extensive the British requirements were for coverage of the American-French target and how importantly Bancroft figured in their expectations can be seen in the following excerpt:

Information to be supplied to Wentworth:

The progress of the Treaty with France, and of the assistance expected, or commerce carried on or in any of the ports of that Kingdom.

The same with Spain, and of every other Court in Europe.

The agents in the foreign islands in America, and the means of carrying on the Commerce with the Northern Colonys.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See Burton J. Hendrick, *The Lees of Virginia*, pp. 280-281, and Carl Van Doren, *Benjamin Franklin*, p. 580.

<sup>6</sup> Hendrick, *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

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The means of obtaining credit—effects and money; and the channells and agents used to apply them; the secret moves about the Courts of France and Spain, and the Congress agents, and tracing the lines from one to the other.

Franklin's and Deane's correspondence with the Congress, and their agents; and the secret, as well as the ostensible letters from the Congress to them. Copys of any transactions, committed to papers, and an exact account of all intercourse and the subject matter treated of, between the Courts of Versailles and Madrid, and the agents from Congress.

Subjects to be communicated to Lord Stormont:

Names of the two Carolina ships, masters both English and and French, description of the ships, and cargoes; the time of sailing, and the port bound to.

The same circumstances respecting all equipments in any port in Europe together with the names of the agents employed.

The intelligence that may arrive from America, the captures made by their privateers, and the instructions they receive from the deputys.

How the captures are disposed of.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Penetration*

The fulfillment of such demanding requirements would have been beyond even Bancroft's abilities if he had not had the remarkable access to information already demonstrated in his first reports to the British. His principal source was Silas Deane, whom the nascent States of America, in one of their first diplomatic ventures, had sent to France in 1776 to try to secure French aid. Americans had long been abroad seeking commercial and financial arrangements, and the several colonies had been sending their representatives to London for many years; but these men were not practiced in the protocol prescribed for the envoys of free governments, and there was no reservoir of American personnel trained to cope with the intricacies of European, and in particular French, court procedure. Silas Deane, in many respects well qualified for his role as commissioner to France, would find his Connecticut Yankee background of ill stead against the wiles of French politics. He needed the guidance of a man of the world, and Edward Bancroft was eminently suited to provide that guidance.

Benjamin Franklin was responsible for the writing of Deane's instructions. Presumably aware of Deane's diplo-

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Flagg Bemis, "British Secret Service and the French-American Alliance," in *American Historical Review*, XXIX, pp. 477-478.

matic deficiencies, recalling his friendship with the scholar and scientist Dr. Bancroft, then living in England, and mindful of the Doctor's defense of American rights published in 1769, he included specific directions that Deane write Bancroft in London and ask him to come to Paris.<sup>8</sup> This Deane did when he arrived in Bordeaux on June 6, and after a month's delay while Bancroft recovered from an illness, the two men met in the French capital.

Bancroft spent most of July in Paris with the American commissioner. Deane freely confided to him all the plans of the Congress and its hopes for French assistance, and even took him along to his meetings with French Foreign Minister Vergennes. The course of these negotiations was minutely recorded by Deane in the evenings for the confidential information of the Congress. But Bancroft occupied his evenings in exactly the same way: with just as much careful detail, with just as much secrecy, and with far greater literary art, he put to paper the same facts. These were the reports that later found their way to Lord Suffolk, head of the British Secret Service.<sup>9</sup>

In the early weeks of the Deane-Bancroft relationship, the association was loose and informal, and Bancroft made no move to take up permanent residence in Paris. During the summer and fall he made several trips back and forth from London. When Benjamin Franklin arrived to reinforce Deane's effort, Bancroft played the role of warm friend and assistant to both of them. A third commissioner, however, who arrived with Franklin, the Virginian Arthur Lee, he evidently spent little time trying to cultivate, perhaps because that rather irritable gentleman was not often taken into the confidence of his fellow commissioners and because he kept separate quarters at Chaillot, some distance from Passy, the center of American activity.

By early 1777 Bancroft's services had become so indispensable in the eyes of the commissioners that he was offered the position of secretary to Deane and Franklin and residence with them at their headquarters at Passy. So at about the

<sup>8</sup> "Letter of Instruction," in *Deane Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 123-126.

<sup>9</sup> "Narrative of Edward Bancroft," in *Deane Papers*, dated August 14, 1776 (from Stevens Facsimiles, #890), Vol. I, pp. 177-184.

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same time he was formally commissioned as a British spy, he was asked by his target sources to work for them, to live in the same house with them, and to accept a salary from their government. So highly was he regarded that Deane wrote to the Congress:

Dr. Bancroft having been involved in the suspicion of being privy to the firing of stores at Portsmouth an incident in his life which is not altogether clear, and finding himself growing obnoxious to the administration and their partisans, left England early in the year 1777, and came to Paris, where he most assiduously devoted his time and abilities to the service of his country, and assisted the Commissioners in writing for them, and by keeping up a correspondence with his friends in London, from whom good and useful information was obtained.

And again:

Though I have several times mentioned Dr. Bancroft and his services, I cannot in justice to these States, to him, and to my own feelings, omit saying that he was early sent for, by order of Congress, from London; that he sacrificed all his prospects there, and during the whole time of our negotiations in France, devoted himself to the Service of country; that he acquired the esteem and confidence of persons of rank and character in France, as well with the political and commercial, as with the literary characters in that kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

### *Modus Operandi*

Whenever possible Bancroft made copies of all instructions received by the commissioners from the government in Philadelphia, as well as communications exchanged between them and Vergennes, and forwarded them to Wentworth or Stormont, according to his instructions, for transmission to Lord Suffolk. But when there was no opportunity to copy the documents on the spot he simply removed them from the house at Passy and took them or sent them to the British Embassy for duplication. Then he would return them to the commission files the next time he got a chance.

How he managed to keep his communications secure is not altogether clear. He did find good pretexts for frequent excursions to England, but the information could not always wait for such trips. In Paris he had the task of outwitting the numerous spies and counterspies that dogged the steps

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<sup>10</sup> "Silas Deane's Narrative, Read Before Congress," in *Deane Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 144-204 (pp. 180 and 201).

of every official there. Vergennes employed a veritable army of agents whose sole duty was to keep watch on the activities of every American in Paris, including Franklin, Deane, and Lee; in the complicated web of intrigue which surrounded American-French negotiations, no one was trusted. It must have required great forethought and alertness to avoid both chance apprehension by the Americans and the deliberate surveillance of the French.

We do know something of the mechanics of his communications system. He was instructed to relay most of his information in dispatches addressed to certain individuals, and "anyone who might accidentally discover these dispatches would think that he had stumbled upon an illicit love affair; they were to be written 'in gallantry,' upon white sheets of paper, with liberal spaces between."<sup>11</sup> The real message, of course, was written in the intervening spaces in a "white ink" for which only Lord Stormont possessed the developer.

Bancroft got his letters to the British Embassy through a dead drop. A member of the Embassy staff went every Tuesday evening after half past nine to the south terrace of the Tuileries, where there was a certain tree with a hole at its root. In this hole was a bottle which would contain any information from Bancroft for Stormont. The bottle was sealed and tied at the neck with ordinary twine about a half yard in length, the other end of which was fastened to a peg of wood. The peg was split at the top to hold a small white card that would make the spot visible in the dark.<sup>12</sup>

The regular visits to the same spot on the same night of every week, the white card in the peg, and the sealed bottle hanging on a piece of twine should inevitably, one might think, have betrayed Bancroft's activities to the French. But the measure of excellence is success; and this method proved effective and safe for several years. Even more glaring, though better explainable, is the fact that the American commissioners, even after it became clear that many of their principal secrets were known to the British, never subjected their secretary to the simple security checks that would have revealed or prevented his depredations.

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<sup>11</sup> Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

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One of Bancroft's most effective ruses was to dwell at length on the danger in which he found himself in England, both in the last months of 1776 when he still maintained a residence there and thereafter on his trips to London, ostensibly to gather information for the Americans. (As arranged by Whitehall, where he was most frequently to be found while in the city, he did carry back to Franklin and Deane some news of British war plans which appeared to be valuable but in reality could do no harm to the Imperial cause.) The intimations of danger begin on a note of bravado:

This has been a day of Fasting & Prayer for the Subjugation of America. I have however in defiance of the Royal Proclamation been dining at Mr. Walpoles with some well disposed Friends & making merry.<sup>13</sup>

But they soon become explicit and serious, if still brave:

70 [Grand], 177 [Priestley], 31 and other friends of mine have expressed for some days, and especially since the Bill to suspend Habeas Corpus, great fears for my safety; and this morning 70 advised me very stongly to think of going soon to 68. I am not subject to unreasonable fears, and I do not think there is yet sufficient reason to profit by this advice, although I must confess that I think that before long the position of every faithful American will be dangerous here, and mine is even now extremely disagreeable. People of position in this country begin to think that it is unreasonable and even dangerous to keep up any intamacy with us, and my best friends, although they Continue to show me hospitality, evidently desire to do it as secretly as possible, and one hears in public from those who are enemies of America nothing but insults and most insolent invectives against the colonists and their friends.<sup>14</sup>

Not content with this verbal camouflage, Bancroft and his superiors in the Secret Service followed it up with a live demonstration, arranging that during one of his visits across the channel he should be arrested and imprisoned on charges of aiding the Americans. It was a convincing act, in spite of his having to be released shortly to get on with his work for

<sup>13</sup> Bancroft to Deane (London, December 13, 1776), in "The Deane Papers, Correspondence Between Silas Deane, His Brothers and Their Business and Political Associates 1771-1795" in *Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 56-58.

<sup>14</sup> Bancroft to Deane (London, February 7, 1777) (reprinted from Stevens Facsimiles, #635) in *Deane Papers, op. cit.* Vol. I, pp. 482-486.



the Service, and the lesson did not fail to take on the Americans in France. In despair, Deane wrote to Robert Morris:

... Doctor Bancroft is arrested in London for corresponding with and assisting us—This worthy man is confined in the Bastile of England, for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus has enabled the wicked tyrant and his slaves to make a Bastile of every prison in England.

I feel more for Doctor Bancroft than I can express; he deserves much from us; consequently will be pursued with the utmost rigour by them, though nothing capital, not even the correspondence can be proved. I wish we may be able to assist him.<sup>15</sup>

The welcome that awaited Bancroft on his return to Paris from his "harrowing experience" can be imagined. To a man who was willing to risk so much, receiving in return relatively little from his native country, Franklin and Deane were anxious to make any amends in their power. While they were limited in financial capabilities, they could repay Bancroft in loyal friendship, and here they did not stint. This was precisely the reward he needed.

#### *Real Dangers*

Bancroft's very efficiency in providing the British with authentic data on the American-French negotiations and with countless reports on the sailings and cargoes of French ships bound for America threatened his undoing as the information was exploited. Lord Stormont used it as the basis for heated demands that France cease violating its official neutrality by helping the revolutionaries, and the implications of the solid factual support adduced to back up the British protests were not lost on Vergennes, Louis XVI, and others in Paris. Almost everyone of any note in the circle of negotiators became suspect. Even the true source, Bancroft, did not entirely escape suspicion; but his well-nourished friendships, along with his own agility and luck, served him well.

Anxious to protect himself from too close scrutiny, Bancroft did not hesitate, presumably with British blessing, to expose others whom he claimed were British spies or who actually were minor ones. He was the key agent in Paris, and if his safety dictated the sacrifice of smaller fry he could not

<sup>15</sup> Deane to Robert Morris (Paris, March 16, 1777), *ibid.* Vol. II, pp. 24-25.

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scruple. In a nicely worded letter he warns Deane, with a forthrightness that begets confidence in his own loyalty, of a reputed spy and traitor:

Since writing the preceding, I have been with a friend whose veracity I can rely on; and who tells me some particulars it becomes you to know, viz., That Dr. Williamson, of Pennsylvania, who came over hither with Mr. Ewing, and who (though ostensibly a zealous American) is secretly a Spy in the service of Government, and has been in Holland some time, collecting intelligence, is now arrived in Paris for the same purpose . . .<sup>16</sup>

With equal forthrightness, in the same letter, he assesses his own services:

All that can be done without money, I am constantly doing, and indeed from my connections I am able to do much more without it, than most persons with an allowance for Secret Services, as liberal as the Powers of Europe generally make to their Ministers.<sup>17</sup>

Of the several persons who at times had reason to be suspicious of Bancroft, Arthur Lee was the most persistent in his accusations. Even as early as the fall of 1776, the commissioner from Virginia presented to his colleagues what seemed to be incontrovertible proof that Bancroft spent a large part of his time on his London trips, not with the friends of America, but with the Privy Council.<sup>18</sup> But Franklin turned a deaf ear to Lee, however convincing his proof of Bancroft's duplicity. For this Bancroft could thank not only his own persuasive personality, but an incident in the history of the relationship between the old Pennsylvanian and the Virginian.

During the 1760's one of the greatest land development schemes ever conceived for America was proposed for most of the land in the Ohio valley and surrounding territories. A number of competing groups sought some form of franchise for this task from the British Government, and the two foremost factions were one led by Franklin, the Walpoles, and other friends and one comprising the Lee family and other prominent southerners. The Vandalia project, as it was called, aroused a bitter enmity among all would-be partici-

<sup>16</sup> Bancroft to Deane (September 13, 1776), *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 237-243.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 242.

<sup>18</sup> Hendrick, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

pants in the tremendous boondoggle, and not the least was that created between Benjamin Franklin and Arthur Lee. Apparently Franklin was not so magnanimous that he could forget his personal feelings to judge objectively Lee's accusations, which as it turned out were more right than he could prove.<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, Foreign Minister Vergennes blunted the effect of Lee's suspicions by pointing the finger elsewhere, at William Carmichael, another secretary to the American mission. Bancroft endorsed Vergennes' proposal that Carmichael be returned to America, although he knew that this action could not secure his own position: the information leaks would still be noted. To protect himself further he gave circulation to the story that the spy was in reality none other than the Revolution's great benefactor, Caron de Beaumarchais. Probably not many fell for that, but at least it served the purpose of deflecting the spotlight from himself for a while.<sup>20</sup>

Arthur Lee, who had realized immediately that the attempt to discredit Beaumarchais was merely part of a smoke screen, was able to establish for a fact in June of 1778 that Bancroft was in direct communication with the government in London.<sup>21</sup> He lost no time in letting Franklin know about the situation. If ever Bancroft had cause to worry, it was now. But again his luck held; Franklin refused point blank to believe the evidence. Nothing Lee could do would convince the old man that his close friend was really a spy and the enemy of America.

We think of Franklin as one of the shrewdest diplomats this country has ever produced and a man who never got the bad end of a bargain; but of all the dupes of history surely none can best his record in the Bancroft case. He allowed personal relationships to color his judgment, and his country suffered the consequences. For although the cause of Empire was lost, it was not for any lack of intelligence from Paris, and the cause of freedom was certainly hurt by Bancroft's activities.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*; see chapter XI.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

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*De Mortuis*

Proof of Bancroft's role during the Revolution did not appear until 1889. In that year the secret papers of Lord Auckland, assistant to Lord Suffolk of the British Secret Service,<sup>22</sup> were made public. One of the documents in the collection was a detailed statement to Lord Carmarthen, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, in 1784, in which Bancroft presses his claim for reinstatement of his pension for services rendered. Since it is the only account we have in his own words of his betrayal of the country of his birth, it deserves to be entered in the record.

EDWARD BANCROFT'S MEMORIAL TO THE MARQUIS OF CARMARTHEN

In the month of June 1776, Mr. Silas Deane arrived in France, and pursuant to an instruction given him by the Secret Committee of Congress, wrote me in London, requesting an interview in Paris, where I accordingly went, early in July and was made acquainted with the purposes of his Mission, and with every thing which passed between him, and the French Ministry.

After staying two or three weeks there, I returned to England, convinced, that the Government of France would endeavour to Promote an Absolute Separation, of the then United Colonies, from Great Britain; unless a speedy termination of the Revolt, by reconciliation, or Conquest, should frustrate this project. I had then resided near ten years, and expected to reside the rest of my Life, in England; and all my views, interests and inclinations were adverse to the independency of the Colonies, though I had advocated some of their Claims, from a persuasion, of their being founded in Justice. I therefore wished, that the Government of this Country, might be informed, of the Danger of French interference, though I could not resolve to become the informant.

But Mr. Paul Wentworth, having gained some general knowledge of my Journey to France, and of my intercourse with Mr. Deane, and having induced me to believe, that the British Ministry were likewise informed on this Subject, I at length Consented to meet the then Secretaries of State, Lords Weymouth and Suffolk, and give them all the information in my power; which I did, with the most disinterested views; for I not only, did not ask, but expressly rejected, every Idea of, any reward. The Declaration of Independancy, was not then known in Europe, and I hoped, that Government, thus informed of the Danger, would prevent it, by some accomodation with the Colonies, or by other means.

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Auckland was William Eden, a forefather of Sir Anthony. He had been Paul Wentworth's immediate superior during the Revolution.

It had been my original intention to stop after this first Communication; but having given the first notice of a beginning intercourse, between France and the United Colonies, I was urged on, to watch and disclose the progress of it; for which purpose, I made several Journeys to Paris, and maintained a regular Correspondence with Mr. Deane, through the Couriers of the French Government. And in this way, I became *entangled* and obliged to proceed in a kind of Business, as repugnant to my feelings, as it had been to my original intentions.

Being thus devoted to the Service of Government, I consented like others, to accept such Emoluments, as my situation indeed required. And in Feb'y 1777, Lord Suffolk, to whom by Ld Weymouths Consent, my Communications were then made, formally promised me, in the King's Name, a Pension for Life of £200 pr an. to Commence from the Christmas preceeding. This was for Services *then rendered*; and as an inducement for me to go over and reside in France, and continue my services there, until the Revolt should terminate, or an Open rupture with that nation ensue, his Lordship farther promised, that when either of these Events should happen, my permanent pension of £200 pr an. should be increased to £500 *at least*.

Confiding in this promise, I went to Paris, and during the first year, resided in the same House with Dr. Franklin, Mr. Deane etc., and regularly informed this Government of every transaction of the American Commissioners; of every Step and Vessel taken to supply the revolted Colonies, with Artillery, Arms etc.; of every part of their intercourse with the French and other European Courts; of the Powers and instructions given by Congress to the Commissioners, and of their correspondence with the Secret Committees etc. and when the Government of France at length determined *openly* to support the Revolted Colonies, I gave notice of this determination, and of the progress made in forming the two Treaties of Alliance and Commerce, and when these were signed, on the Evening of the 6th of Feb'y, I at my own Expense, by a special Messenger, and with unexampled dispatch, conveyed this intelligence to this City, and to the King's Ministers, within 42 hours, from the instant of their Signature, a piece of information, for which many individuals here, would, for purposes of Speculation, have given me more than all that I have received from Government. Afterwards, when that decisive measure, of sending Count D'Estaing with the fleet from Toulon, to Commence Hostilities at the Delaware and New York, was adopted, I sent intelligence of the direct object and Plan of the Expedition.

I had originally explained to Lord Suffolk my Determination to quit this business, whenever an Open War with France, should destroy, what had been my principal inducement to meddle with it; I mean, the hope of preventing a Separation of the revolted Colonies; And as this war now appeared unavoidable, I requested that the King's Ministers would, as soon as practicable, provide

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other Sources of information, and permit me to withdraw myself. This request however was never granted. But to fulfill the promise made by my Lord Suffolk my permanent Pension was increased to 500£ per an. and regularly entered, in Book Letter A. payable to Mr. P. Wentworth for the use of Edwd. Edwards; the name, by which, for greater Secrecy, it had been long before agreed to distinguish me.

In June 1780, the King's Ministers, reflecting that this Pension had been given as the reward of *Antecedent* Services, and that it would be unreasonable, to require a longer Continuance of them, without a farther recompense, agreed to allow me an additional yearly sum of £500, *so long as I should reside in France*; and they encouraged me to expect that this last Sum, or at least a Considerable part of it, would be ultimately added to my permanent pension, in case Government should be satisfied with my future services. I accordingly received from his Majesties Treasury the Stipulated annual allowance of £1000 until the month of April 1782; when the Change of Ministers, with Mr. Burkes Bill, created some difficulty on this Subject. But the matter being Explained to my Lord Shelburne, he took care, before his resignation, to secure and pay me through the then Secretary of State, for foreign Affairs, (my Lord Grantham), a full years Salary, though the last quarter was not then due.

In June 1783, I came to London, and informed Lord North (to whom my latter information had by particular direction been addressed) of my intention of going to America, where I offered my Services, in promoting measures and dispositions, favourable to the interests of this Country, as well as in giving information of the State of things there, and of the views and proceedings of Congress etc. I likewise reminded him, of the encouragement which I had received to expect that the second 500£ pr. an. or at least a part of it would be made permanent like the first, adding that if my services in America, were accepted, it would as I presumed, in any case, be thought reasonable, to Continue to me, at least while there, the same allowance as had been made me in France. With this Proposition, his lordship appeared to be satisfied, but at a subsequent interview, he referred me to Mr. Fox for a decision respecting it, as well as for the payment of a quarter Sallary, then due, alledging, that Mr. Burke's Bill, had made it absolutely necessary to provide for me, through that Department.

I accordingly saw and conversed with Mr. Fox respecting my situation and propositions, which he promised to consider of; but as I had not forseen any difficulty, or delay, and had already agreed, and Paid for, my Passage to Philadelphia, I was obliged to follow the Ship to the Downs, on the 12th of August 1783, before any decision was made, and indeed, whilst Mr. Fox was out of Town. I however informed him, by Letter, on the evening of my departure, that he might expect the Continuation of my

Services to Government whilst in America, and requested that the quarters Salary, then due, might be paid to Mrs. Bancroft. She accordingly soon after received £250 for that Quarter; since which nothing has been paid for my account.

On my part, I have endeavoured, as far as practicable, whilst absent, in America, to render myself useful to the British nation and Government. Great Events indeed did not occur for Communication, and the ill temper produced in America by the Proclamation, respecting the intercourse from thence to the West Indies, did not allow me to do all I had hoped, in promoting sentiments and dispositions favourable to this Country; though I endeavoured it, and I think with some little success, in particular Channels and Connections; and I have endeavoured, occasionally, to vindicate the late measures of this Government, in Newspapers, particularly under the Signature of Cincinnatus, against the Publications of Common Sense.

One years Salary was due to me at midsummer last, which I request the payment of: what it shall be, must depend on the King's pleasure, and that of his Ministers: I make no Claim beyond the permanent pension of £500 pr an. for which, the Faith of Government has been often pledged; and for which, I have sacrificed near eight years of my Life, and my pursuits in it; always avoiding any Kind of appointment, or emolument from, as well as any sort of Engagement to, any Government in the United States; in the full determination, of remaining to the end of my Life, a faithful Subject to my natural and most Gracious Sovereign.

In Dr. Bancroft's Sept. 17, 1784.

ST. JAMES'S 16th Sept'r 1784.\*

It is curious that the outcome of Bancroft's effort to claim what he thought was due him is not known. Of the latter half of his life we know only that he lived comfortably and respectably in England, where he published several scientific and scholarly works. He died in Margate in 1821, to the last, as he was determined, a loyal subject of the King.

\* Bancroft Memorial, *op. cit.*