



**Record Group:** William Alexander, Lord Stirling (1726-1783)  
**Series:** Correspondence, 1764-1782  
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### Biographical Note

One of the most prominent military figures in New Jersey revolutionary history was William Alexander. Born in 1726 in New York, he was of Scottish descent. In 1748, Alexander married Sarah Livingston, sister of revolutionary period governor William Livingston. A man of considerable wealth and social prominence, Alexander asserted his claim, through an uncle, to the title of Lord Stirling in 1759. Although the British House of Lords rejected his claim in 1762, Alexander continued to refer to himself as Lord Stirling, as did his contemporaries. Alexander's family resided in a large mansion in Basking Ridge.

In 1775, having committed himself to the patriot cause, Alexander was chosen by Congress to command the New Jersey militia. In March 1776, Alexander was promoted to brigadier general. George Washington, impressed by Alexander's leadership qualities, selected him to command troops for the defense of New York City. Unfortunately, at the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776, Alexander was taken prisoner. Later released in a prisoner exchange, Alexander rejoined the army and fought at the Battle of Trenton in December 1776.

In February 1777, Alexander was promoted to major general and he later commanded forces at the Battles of Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth. He was stationed at Saratoga to repel an expected British invasion from Canada when news of the American victory at Yorktown came on November 2, 1781. After wintering that year at his headquarters in Philadelphia, Alexander returned in 1782 to upstate New York. While in Albany, Alexander suffered a severe attack of gout and died on January 15, 1783 at the age of 56.

### Collection History

These documents appear to have been collected by New Jersey Adjutant General William S. Stryker in the late-19th century. However, no specific mention of these documents is made in the Adjutant General's published annual reports.

### Content Note

The documents in this collection are mainly William Alexander's correspondence with other revolutionary military leaders. The letters include discussion of troop positions, provisions, prisoners, orders, and army intelligence relating to the campaigns of 1779-81. Also included in the collection is an item of intelligence addressed to General George Washington. In addition to the military papers, there are several items of family correspondence, with Alexander's wife; his daughter, Catherine; Catherine's husband, Robert Alexander Watts; and his father-in-law, Philip Livingston.

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