



Tory Spy: A New York Frontier Family's War Against the American Revolution

Daniel Lovelace

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Two weeks before General Cornwallis surrendered his army at Yorktown, a Loyalist yeoman farmer who had fought alongside the British for six years was hanged as a spy at Schuylerville, New York before a crowd of his former friends and neighbors. Like the vast majority of the estimated 500,000 Loyalists who gambled on a British victory, Thomas Loveless and his family were ordinary people swept up by social and political forces beyond their control. TORY SPY analyses this "Loyalist Dilemma," making use of British and American documents of the period and providing illustrations, maps, appendices, footnotes, and an index.

A few years ago, the movie "The Patriot" starring Mel Gibson graphically portrayed Rebel-Tory warfare in the Carolinas during 1779-1780. The Rebel family in "The Patriot" was a fictional composite, but the trials of the "Loyalist" Thomas Loveless family of Albany County, New York were real. Located astride the principal invasion corridor between Canada and the United States, and a hotbed of Rebel-Tory conflict, Albany County became a battleground between a cadre of refugee "Tory Spies" based in Canada and their Rebel former neighbors.

TORY SPY offers a rare snapshot of the Revolutionary War as a multi-level conflict, in which brother fought brother, neighbor betrayed neighbor, and vague charges of espionage often meant a quick route to the gallows. It is a largely untold story which offers new insights into the price paid by many of the Loyalists, who were the hidden losers of America's first "civil war." This is a story for our times--it is about people responding to the pressures of revolutionary change. Their world was coming apart, and the outcome was unpredictable.

Contemporary Americans may be surprised by what TORY SPY tells them about the violent social conflict that gave birth to their country. Yet the book's interwoven stories--a Loyalist farm family's struggle to survive amidst the partisan violence in Albany County, the father's British military service and later exploits as an officer in the "Tory Secret Service," and the bizarre circumstances surrounding his capture, trial, and execution--were among the harsh realities of America's Revolution.

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