

**THREE HISTORICAL PAPERS: THE NEW
HAVEN CONVENTION OF 1778, PP. 33-62.
THE BOUNDARY LINE BETWEEN
CONNECTICUT AND NEW YORK, PP. 271-
291. THE ECCLESIASTICAL CONSTITUTION
OF YALE COLLEGE, PP. 405-442**

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SIMEON E. BALDWIN

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The New Haven Convention of 1778.
The Boundary Line between Connecticut and New York.
The Ecclesiastical Constitution of Yale College.

THREE HISTORICAL PAPERS

READ BEFORE THE NEW HAVEN COLONY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

BY

SIMEON E. BALDWIN.

(FROM THE ADVANCE SHEETS OF VOL. III OF THE TRANSACTIONS OF
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THE NEW HAVEN CONVENTION OF 1778.

BY PROFESSOR SIMON E. BALDWIN.

[Read Jan. 29, 1877.]

In the elaborate paper by Dr. Bronson, upon Connecticut Currency, Continental Money, and the Finances of the Revolution, which is contained in the first volume of the transactions of this Society, a full statement is given of the various issues of paper money by the United States and by this State, during the progress of the Revolutionary War. From June 22d, 1775, to November 29th, 1779, the Continental Congress authorized the emission of circulating currency of various kinds to the amount in all of over \$240,000,000. Some of it was receivable for taxes; some bore interest; some was made convertible into government bonds, or, as they were then called, "loan-office certificates." The different States were, at the same time, issuing paper money of their own; though with a less lavish hand. That of Connecticut, during this period, amounted to but about one per cent. of the aggregate emissions of Continental bills.

It would have been strange indeed if these bills, issued by a Congress of delegates from a number of different Colonies, never before united in any other way than as common dependencies of the British Crown, and not yet venturing to declare

their independence, had succeeded in establishing themselves in the confidence of the public. So early as January, 1776, Congress found it necessary to recommend the punishment, as public enemies, of all who refused to receive its paper in payment of debts,* and the laws which, at its solicitation, the States were induced to pass, making the Continental currency a legal tender, while ruinous to existing creditors, only tended to depreciate it still further, as regarded future transactions. Nothing could now be bought, except at prices entirely disproportioned to the actual specie value of the article. Congress, representing the United Colonies, was the largest purchaser, and had nothing to sell. It, therefore, felt most keenly this fall in the purchasing power of its promises to pay.

On October 2d, 1776, Congress voted

"That it be recommended to the several States to make legal provision to compel the furnishing of necessary supplies and assistance to the quartermaster general of the Continental army, on reasonable terms, for the public use." †

A few days later, on Oct. 31st, 1776, this resolution was passed:

"Whereas it has been represented to Congress, that sundry inhabitants of these United States, to keep supplies from the army, or promote their own interest, have purchased considerable quantities of clothing, and refuse to dispose of the same, unless upon extravagant or unreasonable terms;

Resolved, That it be recommended to the assemblies, conventions, councils or committees of safety of the several States, forthwith to take suitable measures for the obtaining for the use of the army, such necessary articles, as being thus engrossed in their respective States, cannot be otherwise immediately procured, allowing to the owners reasonable prices for the same; and that laws be provided in each of the States, for effectually preventing monopolies of necessaries for the army, or inhabitants of the same." ‡

The attempt to limit the prices of commodities in any particular town or State naturally had the effect of driving away from it all trade, which was susceptible of a transfer. Con-

* Journals of Congress, ii, p. 21.

† Journals of Congress, ii, 396.

‡ Journals of Congress, ii, 489.

gress did not venture, itself, to attempt to legislate for the whole country as to the regulation of prices; but it did the next thing. It began, early in 1777, to urge upon the States, the necessity of concerted action in this matter.

On Jan. 9th, 1777, Congress "earnestly recommended to the executive powers of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland" the purchase of provisions for the army, and also that they should "limit the prices of the said articles," and should "confer together by epistolary correspondence, or such other manner as they may think best, in order to pursue some general and beneficial plan, in which they may be mutually useful to each other."*

The sessions of Congress during the next few days were principally spent in discussing "the means of supporting the credit of the Continental currency;" and on Jan. 14th, the result of their deliberations took the shape of a preamble, denouncing "the pernicious artifices of the enemies of American liberty to impair the credit of the said bills by raising the nominal value of gold and silver;" and a resolution, asking the several States to inflict upon all who offered, asked or received, upon any sale, or negotiation for a sale, more in bills, than they would offer, ask, or receive in gold, such penalties and forfeitures as would "prevent such pernicious practices;" to make Continental money a legal tender; to provide sinking funds for redeeming their respective proportions of the whole issue; and to lay taxes for the future large enough to meet their share of the annual public expenditures."†

On Christmas day, 1776, a meeting of three delegates from each of the four New England States had been held at Providence, to consult as to what measures could be taken to uphold the credit of those States, and provide for their defence from invasion. ‡

This body sat until January 2d, 1777, and one of the principal results of their deliberations was a recommendation to the

* Journals of Congress, iii, 15.

† Journals of Congress, iii, 20.

‡ 2 Arnold's Hist. of R. I., 390.

Legislatures of the States represented, to pass laws, limiting certain *maximum* rates, which the Convention particularly specified, for wages, the necessaries of life, and indeed most ordinary articles of consumption. Farm hands were not to have over three shillings fourpence a day, in summer; for the best butter over ten pence a pound must not be asked; for potatoes (then beginning to come into common use), "commonly called Spanish potatoes," of the best sort, not over two shillings a bushel; and so on through a long list of prices, which then, doubtless seemed as high to our great-grandfathers, as they now seem low to us.

The minutes of their proceedings were transmitted to Congress, and, being received on Jan. 28th, 1777, together with an explanatory letter from Gov. Trumbull of Connecticut, formed one of the principal subjects of discussion for several weeks.*

On Feb. 15th, 1777, Congress passed a resolution giving a general approval of their action, and recommending the other States to follow the lead of New England in such legislation in this direction, as would best "remedy the evils occasioned by the present fluctuating and exorbitant prices" of labor, manufactures, internal produce, and imports from foreign parts.

To give this a more definite form it was further "recommended to the Legislatures, or in their recess to the Executive powers of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia, "to appoint commissioners to meet at York town in Pennsylvania on the third Monday of March next, to consider of and form a system of regulation, adapted to those States, to be laid before the respective Legislatures of each State, for their approbation," and that "for the like purpose, it be recommended to the Legislatures, or Executive powers in the recess of the Legislatures, of the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, to appoint commissioners to meet at Charleston in South Carolina, on the first Monday in May."[†]

* Journals of Congress, iii, pages 37, 38, 45, 48, 52, 61, 63, 64.

† Journals of Congress, iii, 64, 65.

These were the first of a series of conventions of commissioners or delegates from groups of neighboring States, which were called sometimes by Congress, and sometimes by one of the States interested, during the years from 1776 to 1781, for the purpose of strengthening the public credit. The following is believed to be a full list of those which were both called, and held :

States represented.	Place of Meeting.	First day of Meeting.
New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and Rhode Island and Providence Plantations,	Providence, R. I.,	Dec. 25, 1776.
New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia,	York, Pa.,	March 26, 1777.*
New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and New York,	Springfield, Mass.,	July 30, 1777.†
New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania (Delaware invited, but not represented),	New Haven, Conn.,	Jan. 15, 1778.
New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, and New York,	Hartford, Conn.,	Oct. 30, 1779.‡
New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia (New York invited, but not represented),	Philadelphia,	Jan. 1780.§

* 3 Hildreth's Hist., 182.

† Journals of Congress, vol. iii, 334, 458, 529; 1 N. H. Col. Hist. Soc. Papers, Dr. Bronson's Essay, p. 91; Hinman's Hist. Coll., 468, 569. A copy of the journal of this convention is in the State Archives of Connecticut.

‡ State Archives of Conn., MSS. vol., 15 Rev. War; 19 id. 282, 285; 3 Hildreth's Hist., 298; Journals of Congress, v, 400, 421.

§ 6 Bancroft's Hist., 343. This was called together by the Hartford Convention. State Archives, 8 Rev. War, 271.

States represented.	Place of Meeting.	First day of Meeting.
New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut (Rhode Island appointed a Commissioner, but he failed to attend),.....	Boston, Mass.,	August 3, 1780.*
New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, and New York,	Hartford, Conn.,	Nov. 2, 1780.†

The Providence Convention was called together, at the invitation of Rhode Island;‡ that at York, by Congress; that at Springfield by Massachusetts; that at New Haven by Congress; the first at Hartford by Massachusetts;§ that at Philadelphia by the one at Hartford; that at Boston by Connecticut; | and the second at Hartford by that of Boston.**

This last Hartford convention advised that another be called to meet at Providence, of representatives from New England and New York, at such a time in the next year as Gov. Trumbull might fix. He designated April 12th, 1781, as the day, and Commissioners were appointed by Connecticut and Rhode Island; but the other States did not respond, and the convention failed, for want of a quorum.†† In June of the same year, another convention, representing the same group of States, was held at Providence, but not for the same objects as those of the preceding years.

The Springfield convention of 1777 was satisfied that the plan of regulating prices by law had proved a failure in New England; where it had been faithfully tried, by the advice of the convention at Providence of 1776. They, however, attributed this failure in great part to the fact that no similar laws existed out of New England, which necessarily led to the

* 6 Bancroft's Hist., 343. Its proceedings, edited by F. B. Hough, were published in a small folio, at Albany, 1867.

† 8 Hildreth's Hist., 360. The first day may have been Nov. 15th. See State Archives, 19 Rev. War, 13, 250, 282, 285.

‡ 2 Arnold's Hist. of R. I., 390. § Ibid., 445.

| 9 Rhode Island Colonial Records, 153, 161.

** Hough's Edition of the Proceedings of the Boston Convention, p. 52.

†† 9 R. I. Colonial Records, 378; Conn. State Archives, 19 Rev. War, 250.