

= Lewis Nicola =

Lewis Nicola ( 1717 ? August 9 , 1807 ) was an Irish @-@ born American military officer , merchant , and writer who held various military and civilian positions throughout his career . Nicola is most notable for authoring the Newburgh letter , which urged George Washington to assume a royal title . Born in Dublin , Ireland , Nicola had been an officer in the British Army , serving in Europe before immigrating to the Thirteen Colonies . Establishing a residence in Philadelphia with his family , Nicola opened a library in 1767 and was active in colonial philosophical organizations . As a result of his work to establish the American Philosophical Society , he was elected as one of its curators . When the American Revolution broke out , Nicola offered his services to the colonial government , which eventually appointed him to various positions with local forces .

In 1777 , Nicola proposed that the Continental Congress establish the Invalid Corps . The Congress accepted his proposal and appointed him as its commander . The Corps was stationed at various Pennsylvania locations before moving to West Point , New York . In 1782 , after the end of most hostilities but before the signing of the Treaty of Paris , Nicola wrote the Newburgh letter , which was received coldly by Washington . Returning to civilian life , Nicola nevertheless was still active in military affairs , and was recalled to service during the 1790s , despite his advanced age . During this period , he continued to research for the American Philosophical Society , writing an especially controversial document entitled *The Divinity of Jesus Christ Considered , From Scripture Evidences* , in which he claimed that the divinity of Jesus Christ is not supported by scripture . He died in 1807 , in the possession of only \$ 55 .

= = Early life and entry into the British Army = =

Very little is known of Nicola 's early years . He was born in 1717 in Dublin , Ireland to a British Army officer . His grandparents were Huguenot refugees , and he was 1 / 511 French and 1 / 512 Italian by blood . His parents provided him with a strong educational background and bought him a commission in January 1740 . Later into that year , he married his first wife , Christiana Doyle , on September 19 . During the 1740s , Nicola was stationed in various Irish cities : Galway , Derry , Cork , among others . He was briefly stationed in Flanders , Belgium , in 1745 before he moved back to Charles Fort near Kinsale .

= = First decade in Pennsylvania = =

Doyle died in August 1759 , and Nicola married his second wife , Jane Bishop , on April 18 , 1760 . Their family decided to move to Philadelphia , Pennsylvania , and they arrived August 1766 . Upon the arrival Nicola started his own dry goods store . This did not work , and he eventually opened a library in September 1767 . It started with nearly 200 to 300 volumes before expanding to over 1 @, @ 000 . Throughout the next couple of years , Nicola moved the library to different spots before finally settling to Spruce Street and renaming it " General Circulating Library " .

With the help of his friend John Morgan , Nicola was admitted into the American Society for Promoting Useful Knowledge . By the following year , he became a part of the committee to help a merger with the American Philosophical Society . The merger was completed in November 1768 , and Nicola was elected as one of the curators . At the start of the next year , Nicola decided to quit the dry food business for good and focus more on writing , stating " [ Magazines were ] the taste of the age , and found to possess many conveniences , such as gratifying the curiosity of the public , and serving as a repository for many small , though valuable pieces that would otherwise be lost to the world . " He began editing his new periodical , the *American Magazine , or General Repository* , and the first issue was published in January 1769 . This magazine , devoted to science , poetry , British and American news , folded in December after only nine issues . Nicola , however , continued to conduct research and write articles for the Society .

= = Re @-@ entry into the Army and writing activities = =

Due to financial difficulties , Nicola and his family moved between various Pennsylvanian cities throughout the 1770s . Once the American Revolutionary War broke out , however , he realized that his military skills were probably most needed in Philadelphia . In July 1775 , Nicola was hired by the Pennsylvania Council of Safety to inspect the local defenses in place along the banks of the Delaware River . Since this was the only military position offered to him , in January 1776 Nicola opened a beer @-@ selling shop . Shortly thereafter , he opened a school to help children in various disciplines of mathematics and engineering . This endeavor was short @-@ lived , however , as the Pennsylvania Council of Safety gave him a second military position , this time as a barracks master . While attaining that position ( which he was granted in February ) , Nicola composed and presented to the Council of Safety a " Plan of a Powder Magazine " and saw to the repair of the city jailhouse , for which he was reimbursed \$ 226 by the Continental Congress . On December 2 , 1776 , Nicola was made Town Major of Pennsylvania .

= = Tenure with the Invalid Corps = =

= = = Invalid Corps under Nicola in the early years = = =

In March 1777 , Nicola proposed to the Continental Congress the formation of an " Invalid Corps , " a group of men unfit for combat but still able to perform other military duties . In June , the Continental Congress accepted the proposal , appointing Nicola the commander of about 1 @,@ 000 troops divided into eight companies of soldiers . The Invalid Corps was stationed in Philadelphia for most part of the Revolutionary War , but it was forced to move once General William Howe advanced into the city in 1777 .

On September 25 , 1777 , the Invalid Corps retreated to Fort Mifflin . Due to sickness , lack of clean water , and worries about British incursions , it was recommended to Nicola that he move the Corps to Trenton , New Jersey . Upon arriving at Trenton , Nicola moved to defend locals ' property , seeing " a large vessel in the river [ near Bordentown ] with a very valuable Cargo belonging to Congress which was in danger of falling into the enemies hands " , and taking thirty men to claim the cargo .

Following its brief stay in Trenton , the Invalid Corps moved to Allentown , Pennsylvania , as suggested by Richard Peters on September 29 , 1777 . However , instead of Allentown , the Corps was eventually stationed at Easton and Bethlehem , Pennsylvania to assist in the management of hospitals and stores . Like the rest of the Continental Army , the Invalid Corps suffered harshly from the winter of 1777 to 1778 . After a brief period in the camp of Valley Forge in the spring of 1778 , the Invalid Corps moved back to their original quarters at Philadelphia , just after the British evacuated from it .

= = = Service prior to 1782 = = =

The Invalid Corps continued its many moves , including one from Pennsylvania to Boston . However , for the next three years , the Corps remained either in Philadelphia or the future Massachusetts capital . During this three @-@ year period , Nicola drew the " Plan of the English Lines near Philadelphia " , which showed the locations of important fortifications from the Delaware River to Schuylkill River as well as other locations of British military facilities . Following the drawing of " Plan " , Nicola submitted two papers where he obtained information from the British to Congress : " A Scheme for a Partisan Corps " and " Judicious remarks on a proposed reformation in the Army " . Moreover , he strengthened the Corps by recruiting soldiers around Philadelphia .

On June 13 , 1781 , Nicola and the Invalid Corps was given the order by Congress to move to West Point , New York . This , however , was difficult to accomplish . On June 26 , Nicola wrote a letter to George Washington that the Corps would not move until a replacement unit could take over for them . Another reason hindering the move was pay ; the Corps did not receive a payment for nearly ten

months . A compromise was later reached between Nicola and the Board of War that six months pay would be given to the Invalid Corps . After their leave to Pennsylvania , John David Woelper , a captain of the Invalid Corps , sent a letter to Washington on July 20 , 1781 claiming Nicola was treating the Corps badly . In the note , Woelper requested Nicola 's arrest . Nicola sent letters about the situation to Washington , who wanted to have it settled as soon as the Corps arrived at West Point . Washington , who did not show any favoritism to either , sent both series of letters to General Alexander McDougall and asked the court in West Point to settle the matter .

Upon the arrival of the Invalid Corps at West Point , the charges were dropped , and Nicola was cleared of all charges . On August 4 , 1781 , Nicola complained to George Washington that the Corps would have great difficult during the winter time . Two months later on September 19 , Nicola complained to General Horatio Gates about McDougall 's lack of respect to the Corps . Eventually , Nicola proposed to Washington that the Invalid Corps should move back to Philadelphia ; however , for various reasons , Washington denied it .

During the Corps ' tenure at West Point , Nicola faced many challenges . Firstly , his troops did not act the way he wanted . In October 1777 , Nicola sent out an arrest warrant for Sergeant Major Jonathan Guy for giving uniforms of the Continental Army to the British . The other example was in April 1778 ; Nicola stopped robberies done by members of the Corps in Easton . Secondly , Nicola was unable to fill the higher ranks because of the lack of qualifications from the men . In a letter to Washington , Nicola wrote that without men , he was unable to " keep the men under proper discipline " . During court trials , Nicola had to borrow men from other units as the jury . The third problem was the lack of enlisted men for the Corps .

The final problem was the poor financial situation that Nicola was in . In a letter to the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council dated April 7 , 1779 , Nicola asked for a pay raise , saying he was unable to purchase food or even clothes . Some members of the Invalid Corps claimed they were unable to provide for themselves . On February 5 , 1782 , the Pennsylvania Supreme Executive Council fired Nicola from the position of Town Major ; their reasoning was that no such duty was needed at the time . During that same month and struggling for money , Nicola asked the Continental superintendent of finance Robert Morris for the money that the Congress did not pay the Corps . Even that , however , failed to give the Invalid Corps its money .

= = = The Newburgh letter = = =

On May 22 , 1782 , Nicola wrote the Newburgh letter to George Washington , from his army quarters in Newburgh , New York . Nicola used the first part of the letter to describe a financial hardship that both he and many of the men under his command were facing - their lack of pay . Most of the Army had been waiting for months ? some even for years ? for their pay from Congress . The justification for this was found in the Articles of Confederation , which allowed the Continental Congress to set up an army in time of war , but was not obligated to levy taxes . The right to collect taxes was reserved for the respective states , most of which were unable to afford the maintenance of an army . Nicola believed that this condition was the manifested weakness of a republic , writing , " When the benefits of a mixed government are pointed out and duly considered , will be examined readily adopted [ ... ] " .

Alluding to the person on Nicola wrote Washington , it is well recognized that " The same abilities which have lead us , through difficulties apparently insurmountable by human power , to victory and glory , those qualities that have merited and universal esteem and veneration Obtained the of an army , would be most likely to conduct and direct us in the smoother paths of peace .

After concluding his criticism of the republican form of government , Nicola suggested that Washington take the title of king . Recognizing that the terms " tyranny " and " monarchy " had too many negative connotations at the time , Nicola advised using an alternative title in the near future , " [ ... ] But if all other things were once adjusted I believe strong argument might be produced for admitting the title of king , Which I conceive would be attended with some material advantages .

Washington was aware that some feared he aspired to be an " American Cromwell " . In his reply , dated the same day he gave Nicola a decidedly clear answer , Washington said , " No incident in the

course of the war in me triggers painful feelings as your message , that such ideas are circulating in the army , as you expressed it " . Washington mentioned that he knew not what part of his conduct could have given rise to such a petition , which he thought a " calamity " facing the United States . David Humphreys and Jonathan Trumbull , two of Washington 's aides , certified in a rare precautionary measure that proved the document to be genuine .

Nicola responded contritely to the harsh rejection of his complaints and suggestions . On May 23 he replied to Washington , expressing his sadness at displeasing Washington , and claiming that " nothing had ever affected " him so greatly as his " reproof . " Furthermore , Nicola asked Washington to evaluate every mistake that he had committed . Washington 's answer to this and two other letters of apology written by Nicola on May 24 and 28 are not known . However , the relationship between Nicola and Washington soon returned to its prior normalcy .

= = Dissolution of the Invalid Corps and promotion = =

In November 1782 , Nicola complained to Washington about the fact that secretary at war General Benjamin Lincoln wanted the Invalid Corps dissolved , saying its costliness affected the military more than its benefits . Nicola argued against its dissolution ; he claimed that no other regiment had done more service than the Corps . Against the recommendation of Washington , the dissolution of the Invalid Corps was ordered by the Continental Congress in May 1783 . Between June and August , Nicola was back on the road to Philadelphia . There he resided for two months after the official conclusion of peace by the Treaty of Paris ( 1783 ) , serving as a commissioner in regard to the settlement of matters concerning him and his regiment . On November 27 , 1793 he was elevated to the rank of brigadier general . In June 1784 , Congress finally charged him , for a period of four and a half months , to draw up the certificates for members of his former command .

= = Final years = =

In the mid @-@ 1780s , Nicola advocated the construction of a stagecoach route between Philadelphia and Reading . Failing to secure the route , he planned to temporarily operate a guest house . For financial reasons , he instead became manager of the workhouse in Philadelphia in 1788 . In 1793 , Nicola became inspector of the Philadelphia city militia brigade . During the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794 , he briefly returned to his former position as barrack master and commander of the city of Philadelphia .

During this period , Nicola was maintained his affiliation with the American Philosophical Society , serving multiple terms as curator and continuing with his research . In 1791 , he wrote a controversial pamphlet entitled , The Divinity of Jesus Christ Considered , From Scripture Evidences . This pamphlet concluded that Christ 's divinity cannot be found in scripture . Due to its controversial nature , Nicola considered publishing it in various forms , but eventually decided on attaching his name to the writing .

Nicola 's second wife died in 1797 , and he retired the following year . In 1798 , he moved to Alexandria , Virginia to be closer to his daughter . He died on August 8 , 1807 . Earlier in that year , because of financial troubles , he had added the words " any deficiency I presume the Cincinnati society will make good " to his will . At the time of his death , Nicola possessed only \$ 55 .

= = Publications = =